

Saikyou Mahoushi no Inton Keikaku Arc 1

by Izushiro

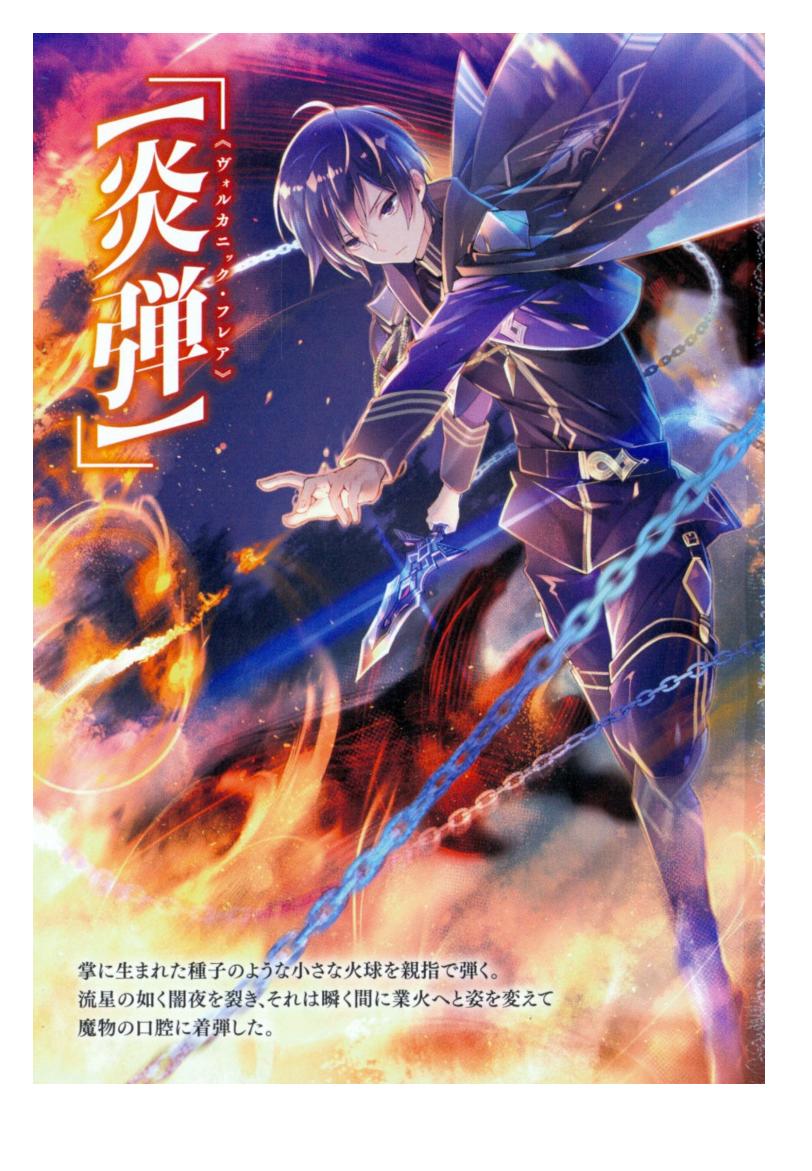
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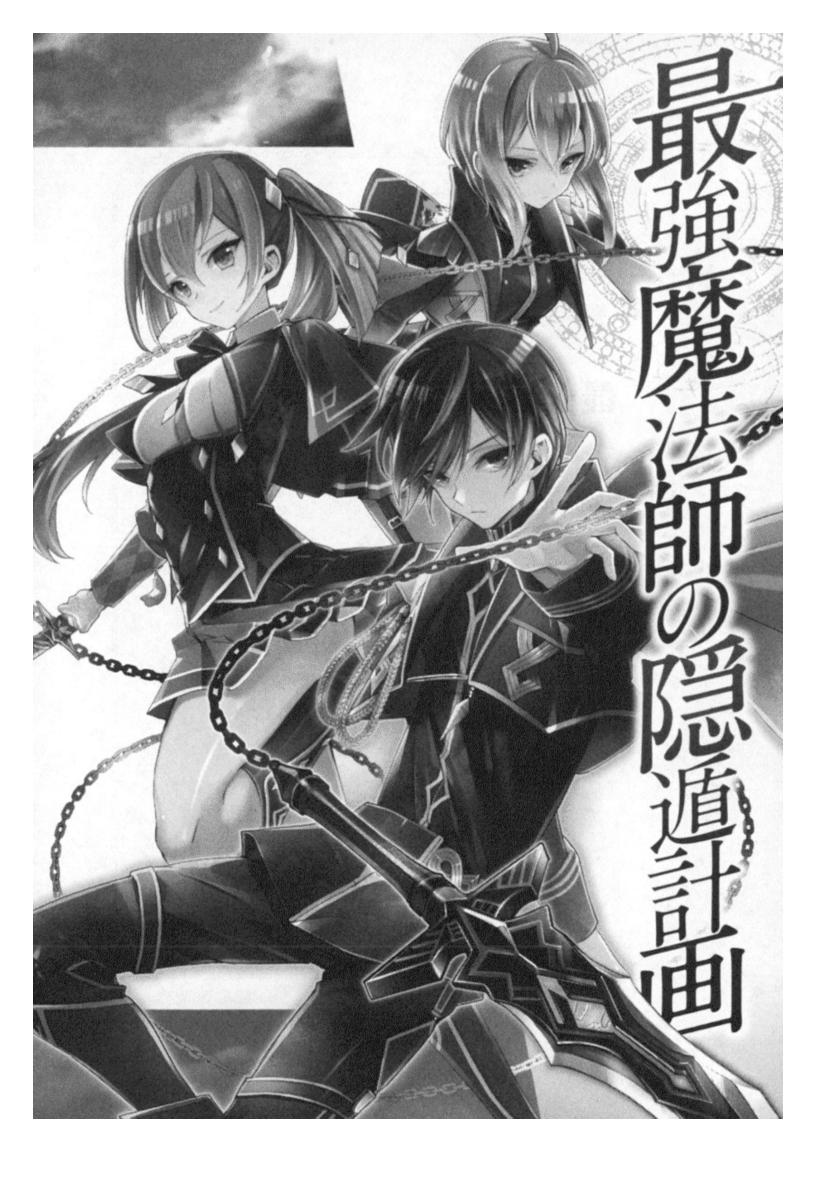
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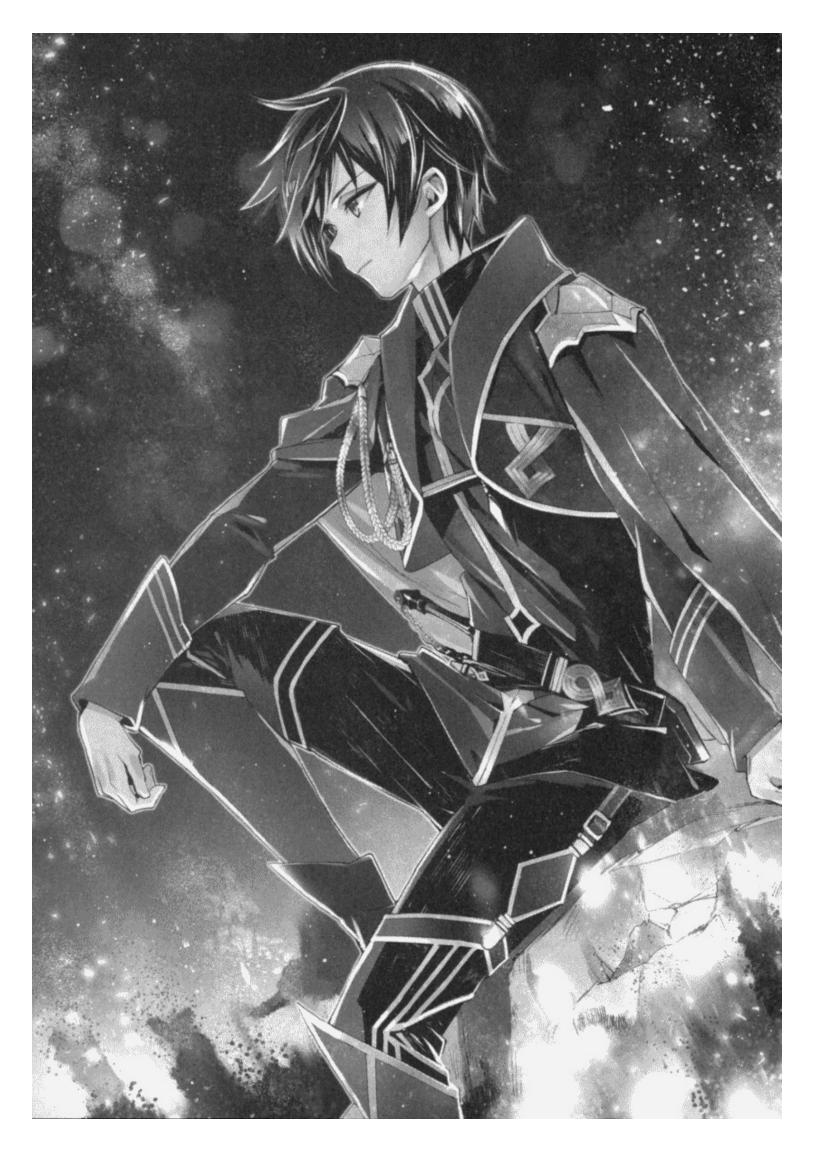












ついに始まった、波乱の課外授業。そこで生徒達に襲いかかる、



さらに、アルスの前に新たな敵影が……! 新ヒロイン・フェリネラの美しきAWRが乱舞する時、 魔法師達の新たな物語が紡がれる!

最強魔法師の

隱調画

2017年初夏、発売予定!

Part 1: Early Bad Luck

Chapter 1: An Ominous New World

The teacher's research facilities were separate from the academy buildings, and were newly built experimental buildings. One room inside the building was many times the size of the teacher's own rooms. It might be better to call it one floor instead. And that one room was entirely allocated to a single new student, which made the teachers perplexed.

Without exceptions, it was regulated that all new students would live in the dorms. This policy was implemented by the management organization in order to suppress any scandals that were bound to happen. It's easy for amateur mages to use magic for selfish and dangerous motives. Even the smallest troubles could cause catastrophes, which was what had already happened quite a few times. If the public populace heard of such news, the Magic Training Organization would have to alter their policies. That would directly lower the amount of national power the country would have.

"All these cutting edge equipment... I being registered in academy was definitely an annoyance but even I can't complain about this." (Alusu)

All the graduates from this academy basically go on directly into military service, and because they're part of the military, they can't really escape this duty.

To Alusu who was immersed in magic training from childhood, the notion of military duty almost seemed like freedom.

He placed his little amount of luggage into the bedroom, and instantly started looking for the bookshelf. In the bookshelf was all of the books that he had asked to be supplied to him. Books very different from basic magic foundations, things that aren't practical to use. Old rare books. There is a saying that you should learn from the teachings of your predecessors. Theories that aren't normally findable, empty and untested various forms of magic that have

branched out into the extremes. Such wonderful ideas is what pushed forward the development of magic to such lengths.

He could go to the library and find the parts that can't be tested by research. There's no better place to learn about magic than here, in a magic academy.

He quickly flipped through the books and determined that all of them were valuable. To supply so many books to a single person would normally be impossible. However, Alusu had presented many theories and research results and was at the forefront of all magic development. Just as the governor had promised, he could definitely expect a satisfactory life here.

Someone then knocked on the door a couple of times.

"Please come in."(Alusu)

As he said that, a woman in full uniform came in with a emotionless smile that revealed nothing. A beauty second to none. In addition she possessed an elegant body with all the right curves, giving her the charm of an adult.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm the board chairman of this academy, Cisty Nexophia. Best regards, Alusu-kun." (Cisty)

She is a celebrity also known as the [Witch]. She retired from the front lines, but still eludes a magical aura full of bloodthirst.

"I've heard a lot about you, [Witch] Cisty-dono. I'm Alusu Reigin. When I was finished tidying, I was planning to pay you a greeting." (Alusu)

To the point that I would retire to do so.* The chairman was definitely not young but no matter how you put it, she looked like she was in her middle 20's; that might be one of the reasons why she was called the [Witch]. Her glossy light brown hair elegantly extended down to her waist. You could tell even through her clothes that the area around her chest was tightly constricted as well as her waist, truly contradicting what her real age would suggest.

The chairman smirked at Alusu's calmness, and erased the aura she was releasing.

"As expected of a [Single Mage]. I guess with only this amount you wouldn't be agitated. And also I'm the chairman right now." (Cisty)

"Pardon me. However there's no need to be polite. ** Chairman was also a

[Single] while in active duty."(Alusu)

"That's a story of the past. Also I was ranked ninth, and only for a short amount of time." (Cisty)

With a smile, the chairman modestly scratched her face as if it was ticklish, however there was no one in the country of Alfa who wouldn't know of her. During her active duty, she was at the forefront of Alfa defending the nation, even in the military she was a popular figure. So when she retired, she naturally took the position as the board chairman of the Second Magic Institution and produced countless talented mages ever since she took the position.

"Leaving that aside, is it okay to be here? The Entrance Ceremony should be in full swing right now." (Alusu)

"I've already done my part in the ceremony."(Cisty)

Was it really okay for the chairman to leave during the entrance ceremony? was a question Alusu did not have much interest about and held his tongue. As a previous [Single], all the students deeply admired her. She was the definitely the center of everyone's attention during the ceremony. You could see the weariness on her wrinkle-less face. Or maybe that was fake weariness. She might've been waiting for words of praise, but Alusu wasn't too interested in friendly banter with her.*

Fairly naturally Alusu pretended to not notice, but he had a feeling that he was too late.

"Now that you mention it, Alusu-kun was absent during the entrance ceremony."(Cisty)

She said in a light tone as if it was nothing.

"I only want to conduct research, so I have no intention of attending classes and no time or interest for fake relationships with other students."(Alusu) "That won't do. The governor said that if you skip too many classes, there will be an order for you to return to active duty."(Cisty)

"————!! What a tyrannical old man."(Alusu)

The chairman charmingly brought her hands over her mouth and smiled.

Alusu quit on his own decision, but he understood that his contributions to humanity were immeasurable. There was no way that the governor would

accept his retirement.

That's why he compromised.

Because he had worked non-stop, his single humble wish was to live the rest of his years in peace. But that dream was smashed instantly.

"Please don't worry about it. As long as you meet the minimum attendance for classes and finish your homework, I'll give you credit. Also because Alusukun's rank as a mage might cause a ruckus, keep it a secret please. "(Cisty)

The rank that showed the power of a mage..... Even among the [Singles], their personal information was kept a secret from the public. So the order to keep quiet doesn't change even now.

"I have no intention of boasting about my rank. It's better that way to attract less trouble."(Alusu)

"Fufu..... Is that's so? Then please lead a meaningful student life~ "(Cisty)

The chairman while smiling said "If anything comes up feel free to drop into my office anytime." and left the room.

Inside the room uneasiness silently spread. Without thinking Alusu left out an inevitable sigh.

"My precious free time has"(Alusu)



About 400 new students all took classes that matched their subject and attended lectures. Classes were normally separated except for practice training and practical skill sessions where everyone gathered together in one building.

Today marks three weeks since the start of classes, and also Alusu's first appearance (sounds like me in uni). Without a single subject he was interested in, he secluded himself in his laboratory.

He thought it was about time he made his appearance so he would still be able to meet minimum appearance marks.

It was the first time he put on his uniform ever since he skipped the entrance ceremony. There was no problem even if you wore it everyday, which went to show how good the material that was used to make the uniform is, to the point that even the national state management wanted it badly. However the design was ... It wasn't as if it felt good to wear, it's just simply made out of high quality

material. It was even better than the uniform he wore whenever he had a mission to do, as the academy uniform was full of anti-magic fibers. Even so, there was absolutely no reduction in magic conductivity from within the clothes. It might be a good idea to wear this instead when there's work to do. In that case, how would it feel?

While engrossed with the uniform, he headed towards the first year classroom.

Today there were many simulation battle and practical training lessons. First period was basic foundations of magic. To Alusu, it was something that he had no need of paying attention to. From the age of 6, he received special training and rapidly learnt magic through self studying. Though it was mostly combat magic.

As he entered the classroom, friendships had already formed in the class. There were 40 people per one class with 10 classes. It was still slightly before class started, but the entire class was talking about yesterdays lecture, and about topics concerning magic.

Alusu sat down in a random seat near the back, pulled out a massive book and started reading. From the very beginning he had no intentions of socializing with his classmates.

A girl with chestnut colored hair with graceful movements approached him.

"Good morning. I'm Alice Tireik. You are Alusu-san right?"(Alice)
".....Nn, Yes."(Alusu)

Without paying attention to the person who had called out to him, Alusu's vision remained on the letters in the book.

She said they were acquainted so he tried recall their meeting, but he quickly gave up and returned his concentration to the book.

With such a cold response, Alice shaked off her discouragement and changed the topic.

"You must've been very sick, it's great that you've returned."(Alice)
"No, I was just skipping. There didn't seem to be any decent lectures, leaving that aside, I want to concentrate so can you go somewhere else?"(Alusu)
".....!! I'm Sorry!"(Alice)

Without mincing words, he told her what he wanted. And in a flash, she felt dejected and lowered her head. As she gloomily retreated, someone from the other side of the class shouted out.

"Who do you think you are?!!"(Fia)

With a crash the chair fell over as an angry yet beautiful red haired female classmate stood up.

The class instantly fell silent and everyone's gazes fell on the two people. The female full of anger had red hair swinging all everywhere and gave off a lady-like feel. You could tell she had elegance, but at the moment she was looking daggers through Alusu with an unyielding spirit. But she had a short stature which made her not as threatening as she hoped she'd be.

"Is there something wrong.....?"(Alusu)

"Is there something WRONG?!! Alice was worried about you so she called out, so what's with your attitude?"(Fia)

Alusu was hesitant, but judged that this would degrade into something worse. He had no intent of becoming familiar with them, but he also didn't want his own personal time to be wasted.

He rose from his seat and looked the furious girl in the eye, then shifted his gaze to Alice.

"Sorry about that. However there's no need to concern yourself about me." (Alusu)

"Yes! I'm sorry for disturbing you suddenly!"(Alice)

"Alice, there's no need for you to apologize!"(Fia)

Alusu after hearing her response immediately sat down in his seat and started reading his book.

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"My name is Tesfia Faver."(Fia)
"....."(Alusu)
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Alusu was full of troubling thoughts. Just a moment ago he told the girls 'There's no need to concern yourself about me'and yet...

Seeing that there was no response from him, the female student loudly made her way in front of Alusu and violently snatched his book away.

This is the worst. His concentration was being torn into pieces.

The type that Alusu hated the most. He forcibly lifted himself up.

"It's Tesfia Faver!"(Fia)

"A noble such as I stated my name. You should return the courtesy by giving your own name." (Fia)

"Nobles forcing etiquette onto others is quite tyrannical."(Alusu)

"———!!"(Fia)

The snatched book flew towards Alusu.

And he easily caught it with one hand.

"Thank you. I'm Alusu Reigin. I have no interest in you so why don't you go somewhere else?"(Alusu)

"N-No interest?!!! Tyrannical?!! You're saying some rather rude things aren't you? This is the first time I've felt this disgraced."(Fia)

Tesfia who got even more infuriated towards Alusu heard the school bell ring, looked around at the situation around them started returning to her seat. She made some efforts to comfort Alice before remorsefully sitting back down in her seat, where she proceeded to stare daggers towards Alusu.

Nonchalantly, Alusu immersed himself into his book again, the matter with Tesfia already completely gone from his head.

The teacher of the first period opened up the textbook on the table.

Alusu didn't bring the textbook with him. The only book he brought with him like it was obvious was that one gigantic book. He immediately opened the book and started his self study.

Alusu considered this tedious. The content of the lecture was all rudimentary knowledge, so naturally he ignored what he heard as it only hurt his ears.

His surrounding classmates naturally gave off displeasure towards his attitude, which made his peaceful school life even more unattainable.

He understood that disturbing his surroundings would bring about misfortune, but it was already too late.

He tried to shut himself inside his own world but eventually he seemed to be unable to withstand all the commotion around him.

"As you were accepted into this academy, you should have also received your

[&]quot;Could you return my book?"(Alusu)

licence. This is given to all working mages from the nation, and if you send some of your magic through it Just like this your rank as a mage will appear. This is calculated through the strength of your magic along with your ability, and are ranked based on your potential combat proficiency."(Teacher)

The teacher held their license and sent magic through it. As the magic flowed through their license, peculiar light shone out and a 3D image, 778/119550 was displayed.

As teachers were not part of the civilian military, the color that projected their rank was different from those of students. What was displayed after their rank was the character " $\bar{\pi}_{-}^{*}$ ", as proof of them being a mage.

It basically states that they had a history of being a mage.

In addition, students are recognized as apprentice mages by the state, as well as the military.

"Of course your ranking also changes based on how much you've practiced and mission results, so ladies and gentlemen, please be ambitious and work hard to raise your rank!"(Teacher)

A mage's court rank was entirely dependent on their ranking. As a result, your future opportunities were also heavily dictated by your rank. In other worlds your rank itself is basically your report card. Fighting isn't what all mages do. Just like the teacher whose rank is in the 3 digits, they could pursue a future in education as a teacher. Conversely, the lower the rank means the lower your salary is, and also makes getting an important position difficult.

The teacher's 3 digit [Triple] rank shocked the class. It was the evidence that they used to serve in military duty, almost like personal information. That they were a former soldier and mage.

It was something that they could show and boast about to others whenever and where ever they are.

Every student in the class started to hold their license in one hand and displayed their rank, and the surroundings became lively.

"Rank 8867!!"

"Rank 4521!!"

With new apprentice mages usually getting 6 or 5 digit ranks, there were

some people who had 4 digits and exclaimed it to the class.

"Alice and Tesfia are 4 digits!!"(Class)

"Alice-kun really does have a lot of talent. And Tesfia-kun really is someone from the Faver family with a rank of 4521, it makes sense that you have such a high rank." (Teacher)

"Thank you very much, Sensei!"(Alice & Fia)

"However, you all passed the entrance examination so don't feel bad about having a 6 digit rank. Depending on your effort, you can definitely raise your rank." (Teacher)

The teacher's line of sight finally laid upon the dubious Alusu.

"Nn? You there, where's your license?"(Teacher)

Alusu who was doing his own self studying was naturally noticed by the teacher.

Apprentice mages who enter this academy have the responsibility of carrying the weight of humanity on their shoulders. Not everyone could have the pride of becoming a mage. That's why everyone who wanted to become an apprentice mage had high ambitions, and were comprised of mainly honors students.

And in the middle of it all, it was inevitable that a person without even paying attention to the lesson, quietly reading his book stood out like a sore thumb.

The entire class gazed towards Alusu.

"I'm sorry. I lost it."(Alusu)

Of course that was the truth. While obtaining the license, he didn't pay much attention and had his wallet swapped. As long as he had the required documents, he could request most things to be delivered from the army. At any rate, he was told to keep quiet about all this from the chairman. From Alusu's point of view, he came here to spend the rest of his years in peace, so he didn't really care about his rank anymore.

"At any rate, it must be an embarrassing number. No need to feel embarrassed about being 6 digits."(Fia)

While laughing, a scornful voice shouted out from none other than Tesfia.

Almost as if provoking him, Alusu's classmates gazed down upon him. I guess this would be one of the results from friend circles already formed. Towards someone they known and someone that they didn't know, it was obvious who they would side with.

Not to mention that it would not be interesting if everyone were honor students.

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"How foolish."(Alusu)
"Making excuses? Why don't you show us then?"(Fia)
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The higher the rank you are, the more dangerous your mission would be. It seemed that most of them don't understand this one simple fact, which was the duty of mages. These apprentice mages have never set foot into the wilderness and seen monsters or demons yet. Even if their combat ability was high, as soon as they step outside they would without a doubt die. That's all there is to it.

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"Haaaaa~"(Alusu)
"Hold on—- You!"(Fia)
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He was at the point where he could not concentrate and left the room. If it was only the teacher, he wouldn't stop the lesson just because of a single student and everything would've been good, but the student named Tesfia really can't shut her mouth; must be her vicious nature.

With a victorious face, Tesfia faced the teacher again.

"Sensei, paying attention to motivation-less students is only a hindrance to our lesson. Please continue."(Fia)

Without returning to the lab, he headed straight towards the library. The library was in the same building as the classroom from the first period, and it was also close to the classroom of the second period.

As expected, there was an enormous mountain of books to endlessly exhaust himself in. These were all books pertaining to magic. There was nothing unnecessary. Alusu saw it as a mountain of treasure.

Naturally, most of the books won't seem to be of much use regrettably. Many of the books contained information that Alusu already knew about, but finding that one hidden gem from the mountain of books was exciting. That is how you learn the contents.

This was the perfect way to release his frustration from the events that occurred during class.

But, he wasn't able to find a hidden treasure. Time passed in the blink of an eye as the chime that sounded the end of the first period echoed.

"I should come back here."(Alusu)

Unsatisfied, he trudged away from the library.

- 2. それにしてもおかしなことを仰いますね。 1
- 3. 何か労いの言葉でも待っているのかもしれないが、こういう手合いは付き合いでいらない気を回せば次回から遠慮しなくなるものだ。<u>↑</u>
 - 4. Stands for original, or former. 1

Names:

システィ・ネクソフィア Cisty Nexophia

アリス・ティレイク Alice Tireik

テスフィア・フェーヴェル Tesfia Faver

Chapter 2: Battle Practice

From second period all the way until lunch was battle practice. Every changing room had sets of practice uniforms courtesy of the academy, and the males changing rooms were full of hostility towards Ars.

"Ch, guys like you with no motivation should quit already." (Someone)

However Ars didn't seem to feel uncomfortable at all from what was just directed towards him.

For someone who had served in the military ever since he was a small child, this was an everyday occurrence to him. Of course as he piled up achievements and raised his rank, the ridicule stopped. In previous cases, not reacting was the best course of action so Ars didn't respond to the remarks thrown at him. On the contrary, he felt a sense of nostalgia as he remembered old memories.

He rapidly finished changing, and this time left the room with a small book.

The dome-shaped practice arena used magic to change physical damage into mental damage so even if a person fainted, there would be no damage to their physical body. As long as it was inside the designated area, all types of magic was affected by this.

When he was in the army, they also had training facilities similar to this.

A battle practice was basically just a fight that permitted martial arts, weapons and magic *etc*. Your opponent would be projected onto a panel in the center of the dome.

Teachers could also participate, but they mostly served a second role as a referee, monitoring the diligent students during battle practices.

When the teacher presses the shuffle button, names would begin to display one after another.

With one class consisting of 40 students, all ten classes participated in the practice training at the same time.

To prevent any possible collisions, the practice arena was divided into many

sections as protective walls were erected with magic.

It was also permitted to use weapons in the practice arena. However it was limited to only magical devices, and these weapons would raise a mages magic efficiency* such as AWR (assist weapon recovery), or more commonly referred to as 《Aura》 which was a type of assistance device which helped mages recover their power.

Because swords or axes made with simply steel would be completely useless against the hard skin of demons, there weren't many mages who used such tools. On the contrary, people who often wore swords did so for a personal reason, as wearing such a weapon was similar to telling the entire world that you weren't a mage.

The academy had arranged various types of weapons for use in the practice arena. Mostly because there weren't many first year students who had their own AWR device. If a person did possess an AWR device, it was most likely that they had already gone through training before they entered this academy. Naturally, Ars was among one of them. However, what he possessed currently was something of no practical use — a book.

"As one would expect of a noble..."(Crowd)

Someone in the crowd revealed their admiration.

In the middle of a circle of students stood Tesfia, with a katana hanging from her waist.

(How old-fashioned.....) (Ars's thoughts)

Ars, who had seen many different types of weapons during his time in the military recalled that there weren't many people that chose to make a katana into their AWR. A double-edged blade was easier to use than a single-bladed katana, which made it the common choice.

"It's our family heirloom that's been passed down for many generations. I've always been using it so I'm already used to it by now."(Fia)

Tesfia was the only person who possessed their own AWR. She was the only person in our class, and maybe even the only person in our grade. From now on apprentice mages would start to discover their own strengths, and find a weapon best suited for their needs. By the time you graduate, everyone would

have their own personal AWR.

That's how significant raising one's magic efficiency is.

If you wanted to summon flames or water, doing so through a weapon would reduced the amount of wasted magic, and you wouldn't have to continuously chant to trigger magic. As a matter of fact, AWRs were developed before the systematization* of magic. There was no doubt that guns or blades were powerless before magic. Such weapons could barely scratch the skin of demons, much less inflict a fatal would. So people started to wonder if you would be able to slice or pierce through their skin with magic, which sparked the development of AWRs.

At that time they imbued swords with magic, raising it's destructive power. However hard and unbreakable blades was the limit for the newly implemented AWR technology. Currently, any blade could go through a magic technique named 《Lost Spell》 and through engraving, it was possible for the weapon to act as an intermediary for magic. As a result chanting could be omitted and it also became possible to subjugate the previously undefeatable demons in close combat.

That's why even though they are called mages you don't really see any of them walking around with staffs or canes. It wasn't practical to make them into AWR's because the very important engraving technique was difficult to do on the shape of a something like a staff.

If you confronted a demon with such a weapon, you would instantly regret it.

In the midst of everyone's admiration, Tesfia stole a glance at Ars, slightly pulled her katana out of it's scabbard towards him.

She wanted to provoke him, but Ars planned on getting through this practice battle lesson peacefully. In truth, he just wanted to read his book.

On the section of the blade that Tesfia pulled out, you could see 《Lost Spell》 engraved all over it.

The shuffling on the panel finished, and one by one the names of many unfamiliar students were displayed.

The panel went through the first practice area, the second practice area, and finally in the third practice area Ars's name appeared.

In the eighth practice area was Tesfia's name.

Although he wasn't her opponent, their practice areas were close to each other which caused her to gazed irritably towards him.

Ars, without carrying any weapons walked towards the third training area while flipping through his book.

His opponent was someone he didn't know. They were classmates but he had no interest in him. His opponent had short brown hair, and with his slanted eyes looked scornfully upon Ars. In his hand gripped a borrowed sword.

The remaining 20 or so students would be spectators, which caused Ars to have a bad feeling about this.

Half of them rushed forward to spectate Tesfia in order to learn something, and the remaining half surrounded Ars's training area. Rather than they wanting to see who was going to win, it was more like they came to an exhibition match to scoff at him.

(What's the deal with all of them?) (Ars)

thought Ars, as he noticed a particularly sharp gaze coming from the middle of all the spectators. In the middle mixed with them all was Alice, but her gaze wasn't the gaze that Ars felt. It wasn't as if he was against the notion of losing though. He actually wanted to lose quickly to get this all over with.

Although he planned to lose, he had no intention of taking any damage. Deceiving all of the crowd including the teacher would be easy. Of course even with Alice or Tesfia watching, it wouldn't change the fact that it was a trivial matter for Ars to deceive them all.

But, he felt an ominous stare carefully observing Ars's every action. From their stare, he determined that their strength was in the triple-digits. There was no chance that they would notice what Ars was planning to do.

The sensation of taking damage is the worse, muttered Ars as he sighed.

"My luck's pretty good today. This guy's basically a sandbag."(Opponent)

On one side was a sword and the other side was only a book. You could tell the outcome of the battle by just looking at it.

At the same time as the alarm that signaled the start of the battle, his opponent leapt forward. His amateur movements were painful to watch.

(He's quite brazen in front of a crowd) thought Ars. He had also imbued his magic through the sword, but the magic aura that covered it was crude and awful. It was a disgrace to the weapon.

Ars matched the slow moving sword, and he pretended to dodge at the last moment.

During the interval, she shifted his vision towards the page, and progressed in his reading.

His opponent took a distance from him and once again, the sword flowed with his magic. As a result, the engravings on the sword started glowing red.

"[Burn • Edge]"(Opponent)

The sword was covered in flames.

Normally you wouldn't need to chant in order to activate the magic, but the fact that he did could only mean that his power was in the 5 digits, or he was just an idiot. Of course you could simplify the chant, but there wasn't any harm from chanting the full name of the magic as you could let the magic establish it's phenomenon by itself, which isn't useless at all.

But from the satisfied look on his face, you could tell that he didn't understand what he was doing. The only reason he could use the magic was thanks to the AWR's assistance. To be able let magic manifest itself from just chanting it's name without an AWR would roughly be the skill of a triple digit rank.

In the first place, he doesn't even know that [Burn•Edge] is a rather low-leveled magic. It was a simplified version of a high-level magic called [Enjin](lit. flame blade), and it's power is also lower by a few stages. To see him use that magic with such a satisfied face, even Ars felt a bit embarrassed.

The spectators while not surprised by the magic, anticipated the conclusion of this battle.

On the other side where Tesfear was fighting, cheers exploded. On Ars's side, whenever he barely avoided an attack you could hear the crowd chant"Almost!"with excitement, but none of those were directed towards Ars.

Alice was the only one among them who nervously clenched their hands. From her rigid fingers and tightly closed palms, Ars felt the kindness that she eluded the first time they met.

It wouldn't be good to drag this on for too long, so in order to finish this quickly Ars closed his book.

Ars purposely took a downwards diagonal slash from the front. But, he managed to place the book in between him and the blade.

The explosion caused a cloud of dust and as it cleared, what remained was the figure of Ars lying on the ground, with his opponent towering above him exhausted.

After the alarm that signaled the end,

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"--- !! Ars-kun.....!"(Alice)
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Alice raised her voice. The spectators who heard her worried voice, could only switch to an expression of contempt from wanting to celebrate his defeat with both arms in the air.

But without any regard to Alice's worries—

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"""———!!"""(Crowd)
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Ars stood up as if nothing had happened. And begun reading his book while leaving the practice area. If you had just looked at the scene of events, you wouldn't be able to tell who was the victor and who was the loser.

As Ars noticed the dumbfounded crowd, he recognized that he might've been a bit too quick in getting back up. To be exact, the crowd was surprised by the fact that he was so calm which Ars didn't realize.

I mean, how are you supposed to even take damage from that level of magic. For getting hit on purpose, he nearly instinctively dodged backwards so he considered the results to be the best he could've achieved.

It was unexpectedly hard to lower himself to their level. The reason why he wanted to end it so quickly was because his impulse to read his book way too great. It wasn't something that he was aware of himself. It certainly felt like a waste of time.

As it everything concluded, the confused gazes of the spectators were all silent.

"Are you all right, Ars-kun? How's your injury?"(Alice)

Alice who had quickly ran over towards Ars examined his body from head to

toe.

"You do know that you can't get physically injured in this practice arena right?"(Ars)

".....Ah! That's right..."(Alice)

Alice still wore a dubious expression on her face as if she felt uncomfortable.

Ars glanced over his body and noticed one fault. Of course the one who caused the explosion was Ars. He hind any possible hint of what may have caused it, but Ars who unconsciously didn't want to get his clothes dirty coated them with his magic. It wasn't something unusual to him. Every time he went on a mission, he constantly coated his body with his own magic.

Because magic had a characteristic of becoming familiar to organic substances, it accumulated inside the body. There was no choice but to constantly emit magic. Just by emitting their magic over their body didn't mean that it would be able to prevent any attack. At most dust and liquids would not stick themselves to their body.

On the other hand magic doesn't have a great affinity with inorganic substances, which means that it's power won't be absorbed. This results in it being possible to strengthen materials and store magic inside inorganic substances. The problem was how long would it last.

Ars who was just standing in the middle of a huge dust cloud was not covered in any dirt.

Immediately —

"More importantly, is it okay to not be concerned about your friend?"(Ars) "Fia will be all right. She's really strong."(Alice)

Fia? Ars understood that she was talking about Tesfia, but still held no interest as he was facing away from the eighth practice area gazing towards his book. He checked to see if the book was okay from the explosion earlier and examined the front cover. No matter how much magic was protecting it, paper is paper. But there was no dirt on it at all, much less any rips.

Relieved that there were no marks, Ars flipped the book around.

"Your name was Alice, was it? It's nearly your turn."(Ars)
"Mm"(Alice)

Ars who wanted to escape off into his own little world changed the subject.

"Even though I lost, go give it your all"(Ars)
"Naturally"(Alice)

He didn't really mean it but he didn't want this to drag on.

Alice with a broad smile rolled up her sleeves.

Ars parted with her and started walking towards wall near the exit. He felt a bit of fatigue from being a bit more talkative than usual.

To the teachers, practice battle lessons were one of the more exciting lessons. Because the use of magic was forbidden outside of practice battle lessons, it was a good opportunity for the students to show the results of their training. That's why the figure of Ars could not be spotted within the crowd of spectators as he had already lost all interest.

Tesfia also finished her match, and triumphantly exited the practice area. As soon as started talking to Alice, she took a glance as Ars and smirked. The next person to battle in the eighth practice area would be Alice. Her opponent was male, as battles between mages were not separated by gender. In other words instead of strength, magic ability greatly influenced battles.

Unlike the scornful crowd that watched Ars's match, Alice's crowd was silent and serious. As thanks for spectating his own match, Ars took a bit of time to go spectate her match.

Alice wielded a halberd.

(She's also pretty old-fashioned) (Ars)

However Alice's handling of her halberd was something to look out for. It wasn't particularly fast or skillful spearmanship, but her movements were elegant. While still clunky and crude, her ability to switch from offense to defense was brilliant. It was almost like acrobatics, but there was still room left to polish. The halberd that Alice wielded was something she borrowed, but without practicing habitually one could not move like that.

Rather than a halberd, she seemed to be proficient at handling spears.

Her proficiency in martial arts certainly has value, but that alone can't decide the victor in a magic battle.

The point is magic would decide the victor. When facing a demon, enchanting your weapon with magic would certainly be effective but even so you wouldn't be able to beat them with just that. Because demons have amazing regeneration abilities which heals cuts and grazes instantly.

When fighting a demon, you need to pinpoint their core and deliver a destructive strike to it. In that respect, magic certainly had the power and scope to be effective.

A demon's core was located in a different area for each one of them, so accurately pinpointing it's location difficult.

Alice's opponent wielded brass knuckles. It was a popular weapon that mages who preferred close combat used.

From the pointed knuckles, [Ice Arrows] were formed and relentlessly rained down towards Alice.

For someone who only had received basic training as a mage, he used the first-class magic skillfully. Fire, water, ice, wind, thunder and earth *etc.* formed the basis of offensive magic, and was also they first thing everyone learnt in basic magic class.

Alice rotated her halberd in a circle quickly and the blade gradually began to shine.

As the ice arrows made contact with the blade it would shatter into small pieces. But that wasn't all, the debris from the ice arrows were actually sent back flying towards the caster with great force.

In an instant he collapsed, and the match was decided shortly thereafter. In the same manner as Tesfia, a loud cheer erupted from the spectators as the power of both 4-digit mages were made known to everybody.

As she made her way nimbly out of the practice area, they and Tesfia highfived each other like everything was planned beforehand.

(That magic just now was [Reflection]...... No, [Reduction]) (Ars)

[Reflection], or more commonly named as Counter was a mid-level magic. Moreover, [Reduction] was on a higher level than it and wasn't a spell that a student should know. Both of them were light attribute magic. However, the

number of people who could use Light magic were few. Mages could normally acquire aptitude for an attribute, but in the case of Light magic, it was something that only people born with the talent could use it which was why there weren't many people who could handle Light magic. There is also a Dark attribute, and they were all commonly named as Elements. However, there is also a disposition that was part of none of them. Just like

1. 伝導率 = conductivity/efficiency ↑

Ars.....

2. 魔法の体系化 = the organization of magic; categorizing it. 1

Chapter 3: Omen of Fate

As the practice battle lesson approached its latter half, it changed to self practice. The time that was allocated towards polishing up one's existing magic or learning new magic.

Practicing magic would never be useless. Even though it differs from person to person, as you spent your magic, it would have the effect of increasing your total amount of magic. Magic would continually generate within your body until it your pool was completely full. It would not increase if you were already full. However through continuous practice and expenditure of magic, it would be possible to gradually expand the amount of magic you could store. Although innate talent does affect the size of your magic pool, it ultimately came down to one's own hard work.

The new students in the practice arena had no clear clue of what they were to practice during self study. As a result they became enthusiastic about practice battles.

Ars was in the middle of them all shamelessly reading his book. The practice arena was basically the same throughout as the ground was mostly made out of dirt. This was a consideration towards mages who specialized in earth magic. The result was that there was a little dust, but nothing that couldn't be solved with magic.

There should've been no-one with an interest in Ars. Within all the battles and spectators, he was located at the edge reading his book in a trance.

"Stop it!"(Alice)

"This'll be a good lesson for him. You, come with me. "(Fia)

Alice tried to stop Tesfia who approached Ars and stood over him. Without even trying to conceal his unpleasantness, he let out a sigh while inserting his fingers in a gap between the pages.

Tesfia was completely distracting his studying.

"You're really persistent aren't you."(Ars)

"Don't think you're getting off lightly with what you've done."(Fia)
"What could you be talking about?"(Ars)

Tesfia grabbed Ars by the chest and roughly lifted him up. However because Tesfia's height was only till Ars's chin, she could only lift him up halfway which caused her face to distort with anger.

"I won't allow you to forget your insult towards the Faver House."(Fia)

Did something like that happen? Even though it was something that had happened 2 to 3 hours ago, it was a matter so trifle to Ars that he had trouble remembering that it happened without Fia's reminder.

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"So what?"(Ars)
"————!! "So what"?!!"(Fia)
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Those were his true feelings. In fact, he was more bothered that he could not read his book in peace.

Anymore than this would be troublesome and annoying.

"It was my bad, so please just let the matter drop."(Ars)

His eyes were glued towards the open book as he apologized half-heartedly.

"Don't make fun of me!!"(Fia)

With all her wrath, Tesfia hit the book out of his hands.

The classmates who were spectating matches shifted their gaze towards Tesfia as they heard her anger. In an instant everyone became silent wondering what had occurred.

Distracted by the commotion, the students who were in the middle of matches stopped. Their thinking that just because it was a practice match, it would be okay to be distracted was proof of their inexperience.

The book danced in the air with it's pages turning, as it landed on the ground and caused a small dust cloud.

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"Fia!!"(Alice)
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Alice cried out quickly, warning Tesfia that she had crossed a line. Tesfia still full of wrath retreated one step, and let go of Ars's hand. However, you could

still see the anger in Alice's eyes.

The red-haired student, Tesfia must've had a lot of pride to be provoked so much. As far as Ars was concerned, his actions just now weren't that big of a deal. However for Tesfia it was different...... she was still a child.

A child who has never seen a demon, as child who lived peacefully, a child who happily lived behind the walls that protected them from demons without any though, the values of someone who has no experience of reality.

Ars during his time in the military was baptized into it by men many times larger than himself, and endured harsh training. For the most part, his life till now has not been an easy path.

Even still Tesfia's actions were an annoyance.

"I challenge you to a match!!"(Fia)

Ars felt that there was no backing out since they've already come this far. He slowly walked towards the book on the ground, lowered himself and picked it up. He then carefully brushed off the dirt.

This entire situation wouldn't end if Ars let her win the match. At any rate, no longer did he plan to lose. To make sure there was no trouble afterwards, he planned to make it clear once and for all.

In the military they had a method where they ruled by fear, but it was easy to generate animosity among the surroundings. As mages could easily use magic, there was a tendency for higher ranked mages to look down upon others. Nevertheless in order for there to be no influence on leadership and command, they hammered it into their bodies. Ars himself thought that that method wasn't entirely wrong. Although it was nothing to be praised, it still was able to produce results.

Ars right now was thinking upon the same lines. Without a little fear, Ars felt that his next three years would be wasted and meaningless.

He wasn't able to completely remove the dirt. There was a need to teach a lesson to her who had roughly treated this precious document about the wisdom of magic research.

He painstakingly stroked the cover, and lifted his head towards his opponent who was generating great animosity.

"After class then. We'll use the practice arena, no complaints?"(Ars) "Nothing."(Fia)

Alice had an expression as if she wanted to stop this fight, but she only uttered that single line. Because it was the result that both of them wanted. However it started, it resulted from Ars accepting Tesfia's one-sided demand. Alice could only watch over what would happen.

Alice had no other choice. No matter what she as a spectator said, it would change nothing. It was the same for Ars....

It was a good lesson on how dilemmas could sometimes escalate into disputes.

"After class in the practice arena, we'll settle this. Between us three."

There was still an hour or so until lunch break, but Ars changed hurriedly and left the practice arena.

And headed towards the chairman's room.

Normally you would have to request the usage of the practice arena through the receptionist, but in Ars's case as he was hiding his rank, he could just make his request directly to the chairman in order to reserve the entire arena.

"I don't mind, but please don't tell anyone."(Cisty)

The question was mixed with a sigh and seemed to be a rhetorical question.

"Tesfia or something like that."(Ars)

"————!! Isn't she the Faver House's honorable daughter?"(Cisty)

Her eyes were filled with worry more than surprise.

"You can't..... call the match off?"(Cisty)

"Impossible. She was the one who came looking for trouble so please voice your concerns towards her. Also matches between classmates are allowed, so the chairman intervening and stopping one would cause unwanted trouble." (Ars)

[&]quot;Fia, and even Ars-kun....."(Alice)

[&]quot;And also as the rules, it'll only be me and you two. Don't bring anyone unrelated. Sorry but Alice, be the spectator." (Ars)

[&]quot;That's fine with me but....."(Alice)

[&]quot;Of course."(Ars)

[&]quot;So, I wonder who was the fool that angered you?"(Cisty)

As if warning the chairman, Ars told her the truth.

Then he shifted his gaze from the chairman and closed his eyes while sighing. As Ars slowly opened his eyes, they were full of annoyance.

"There's not much time left, so I want to just leave it at this."(Ars)

The chairman slightly opened her lips as if she was about to say something but decided against it as she had given up on this matter. However, at the end

"The academy's practice arena was built less sturdy than those of the military's, so please take that into consideration." (Cisty)

It was a warning that even though the practice arena did indeed change all physical damage into mental stress, Single Mages if they felt like it could cause such damage that even when converted would leave after-effects.

"I understand."(Ars)

As he concluded with that and was about to turn back, he discovered the weapon that he would use in his match after class.

"Can I take this?"(Ars)

"That's no problem, but what are you planning to use it for?"(Cisty)

"Of course for the practice match. The book on me right now is a precious object."(Ars)

As he said that, he he grabbed a simple school pamphlet off the table. It was less than a centimeter thick and was weak, but that wasn't a problem.

"Whatever the circumstances may be, that's a little....."(Cisty)
"This is plenty. I know her strength."(Ars)

He showed the chairman the pamphlet, which was related to magic. The pamphlet was a little bent as is anything made of paper, and in an instant —— the paper straightened itself sturdily.

The chairman was surprised by such a scene, and as to relieve her surprise she heaved a sigh of relief.

"I doesn't seem that I need to worry about you. That was the first time I've seen such beautiful magic bestowal." (Cisty)

"Thank you for your kind words. On that note, this is just about the right amount." (Ars)

"That seems so."(Cisty)

For the flow of magic, the smoothness of the transmission of magic affects it's power and durability. No matter how roughly made something was, with perfect magical processing it would become a weapon.

That's why for the pamphlet that Ars called a weapon, with the magic that was imbued inside it could be compared to the likes of famous swords. To even rank those swords under the pamphlet could be said as true balance.

However, Ars's thought process was a little different. The true strength of a weapon only shines when they cross each other in battle.

In this case, Ars weakened it's destructive power.

As one would expect, no matter how much magic you imbue into paper, it was still paper was a thought that the chairman could not get out of her mind. However, it would be another matter if you cast magic without the use of the pamphlet.

He managed to stop his salute which had become habitual during his time in the military, deeply bowed and proceeded to leave the room.

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"Then, I'll see you around"(Ars)
"....."(Cisty)
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Returning to the classroom would be troublesome.

However it wasn't because he would be bothered by the gazes of his classmates. It was just because the lessons after lunch were annoying. If he was not concerned with obtaining attendance credit, there was no doubt that he would never go to class.

Ars left the school building. He made his way towards the laboratory without even thinking.

Ars in his own room with a crude onigiri in one hand ate a lonely —— although the person himself did not feel that way a single bit ——lunch. If he went to the cafeteria within the school he would be able to enjoy first-class meals, but Ars never even went once. Additionally while eating lunch, he read through books fishing for new data.

Ars then shifted his thoughts about the mysterious gaze that he felt during the practice match.

It would be a mistake, if the chairman was not aware of a person in school grounds who observed Ars on that occasion, so it wasn't a big deal. Assassins, terrorists, all of those assumptions seemed off. Anyway, as long as they had no intention of causing harm, there was no need to search for them. Sooner or later he would find out. Since it was Ars, that would certainly be the case. Of course he had an inkling of who they were.

In the room that was allocated to Ars, he opened the bedroom door and took a glance inside. His gaze was fixed upon a black attache case.

Just before him was his sole partner who had fought alongside him.

Ars's AWR was specially made. You could say that it was the result of his research. It was uniquely arranged and was one of it's kind in the world.

But, Ars who retreated his gaze from it wished that his life would no longer require him to use it. He brought it along with him as if a reminder that he could not escape from the military, or as a gift from the results of his research. That might've been the indulgence of Ars, who himself searched for somewhere in the outside world that he did not know of. *

Over 50 years has passed since the white tower started to keep demons at bay, and if one were to look upwards they would see a forged sky. The fake scenery of the clear blue sky that you would see everyday was just the results of a filter. That's why the generation that know nothing of the outside world know nothing of rain, know nothing of snow. They know not of the many different clouds that dotted the sky. Without knowing of the earthly scent that the wind brought about, they only knew of the sky with identical clouds all moving in the same direction. That the real world was the outside world dominated by demons.

During his time in the military —— even thought he still is part of it now —— his missions that comprised of slaying demons caused him to venture into the outside world god-know how many times. However every time Ars stepped out into the outside world, he never knew what was going to amaze him next.

^{1.} それは免罪符であってアルス本人は知らず外の世界にこそ居場所を求めたのかもしれない

Chapter 4: Different Fates

In the blink of an eye lunch break passed, and afternoon classes had already begun. He was so concentrated that he didn't hear the bell go off.

Ars without any rush reluctantly stopped his reading and headed towards the classroom with his book in one hand.

Since he slowly took his time walking, by the time he arrived class had already started. Even if it was more for his own sake, he planned to make sure he didn't bother anyone when entering.

Without a sound he opened the door, noticed an empty seat and sat down in it. However since he was the only person entering the room, many people noticed him and shifted their gazes towards him while clicking their tongues in displeasure.

Maybe it was because the news of his quarrel with Tesfia had spread that there were many harsh gazes directed towards him, but he paid them no attention as always.

Tesfia and Alice's rank was already wide-spread knowledge throughout the school.

Of course that was the case. People had high expectations of first year students with a surprising four digit rank.

The fact that both of them were also beautiful just spurred on their popularity. Tesfia was noble and beautiful, with determined eyes filled with great dignity. Her height wasn't that tall but that could be said to be one of her charming points.

Alice had a gentle face full of affection, and also had a slender and wellproportioned body which gave her the charm of an adult.

With the two of them side by side, it would no doubt be a dazzling scene.

For Ars who had confronted these two people, the entire first grade was already his enemy. On top of that his posture and attitude during class didn't really help him.

Ars who was trying to cause no trouble was unresponsive to all this chatter. He

had no tolerance with other people who deemed other people to be the cause of their problems. It would only be pointless labor.

Ars didn't concern himself with all the whispering going on behind his back. However, if this begun to start disturbing his own time, he would have to do something about it.

Suddenly, a crumpled up paper ball came flying towards Ars from the side. Naturally he dodged it.

If this was something done under Tesfia's orders, then he planned to pay her back fully after class, but Tesfia who was sitting across the room from him was without any concern of what had just happened, deeply concentrated in the lesson. It also didn't seem like she was pretending not to see it. Her gaze was fixated towards the display at the front of the room as she frantically copied down what was on it.

Alice did notice it, but could do nothing.

If she retorted here, it would only make matters worse. As expected of Ars, without even breaking his concentration he managed to evade the paper ball. Or you could rather say that was a fault of his. He was constantly keen on sensing everything around him as if he was a mage in battle.

Every time he went to the outside world on a mission, it was never a one day trip. To be able to sleep while being able to bear the dread of a potential attack from demons, he drilled it into himself to not let any sound escape his notice.

That's why they could be considered thieves who were stealing away Ars's time.

Ars picked up the paper ball, and ripped it into many shreds. He then ran his magic through the many specks in the palm of his hand.

To cover (imbue) things through one's magic was the basics of the basics, but many people failed by relying on their senses too much. However once they got a grasp of it, it was hard to forget the sensation of how to do it.

Ars just by trivially thinking about it caused his magic to cover the paper. These could be used as even a weapon. The sensation of covering objects with magic could be said to be treating your target as a part of your own body. Mages could perceive all the magic that their bodies were constantly producing. That's why through training, one could consciously circulate their magic though one

part of the body to another. However, it was hard to consciously direct magic outside your body.

It could only be achieved by a phenomenon, that is the reconstructed magic ceremony method. The magic that was transferred within the object was definitely magic, but it wasn't the case that it was magic itself.

He gripped the shreds lightly covered in magic in his hand, and without anyone noticing flicked his thumb.

It bounced off the classroom walls and hit five students on the head. In that moment they all reverberated from the impact a little and toppled on top of the desk all at the same time.

It was similar to a pea shooter. He only applied a little magic to the scraps of paper to make them a little harder, and accurately hit the students on the joint of their necks which caused them to faint. The power of the shot was similar to a chop to the neck. As there were no external wounds and the weapon used were just scraps of paper, nobody noticed anything.

Alice who was surprised at what had happened shifted her gaze away from him and hadn't seemed to noticed that it was the work of Ars.

After that Ars managed to enjoy his two last classes before school ended. The students who were lying on their desks had no signs of waking up, but they were still alive of course.

Around the time homeroom ended they finally woke up.

They wondered why they suddenly fell asleep as they rubbed their eyes, and realized that they had missed most of the lesson and wanted to improve from now on.

However they had no intention of improving on their meddling with Ars.

Then, the students who should've been going home or doing their own training gathered around Tesfia and Alice as if it was their daily routine. Ars noticed that it was all related to magic from the conversation that he overheard.

While in class, Tesfia was the picture perfect honors student. That's why she must also be fairly smart.

Certainly, there were also people who were also just attracted to them in the crowd.

It was clear that there was a hierarchical relationship between them as their ranking was higher than all of the crowd who were also aiming to be mages. It might be an exaggeration to say that all of them were trying suck up to Tesfia and Alice*, but all of them aimed on raising their own rank. People who desired on becoming mages were closely tied to their rank, so it can't be helped that they all want to raise their rank.

The two of them didn't forget about their plans after this today.

"I'm sorry. We have some things to take care of after this"

Tesfia gently notified everyone, and Alice said the same thing.

"The teachers called for both of us, so I'll see you tomorrow."

Tesfia gazed towards Ars. Her pupils were full of force, as if implying to Ars to not run away from their confrontation.

As they used the reason of being called by a teacher, nobody stopped them from leaving.

"Can we wait until you're finished?"

The voice belonged to a female student who was carrying a book concerning the fundamentals of magic. Her short stature gave her an adorable look and gave her the image of a small animal, but that would only work against the male students.

Couldn't she just go directly ask the teacher? was what Ars thought, as he saw members of the mage's society in the crowd. They probably wanted to get acquainted to future promising mages. Of course there were also people who just wanted to be friends with those two.

"I'm truly sorry. I don't know how long this is going to take. However I do plan to finish this as fast as possible."

There was a snide remark included in her comment, but only Ars and Alice noticed.

"I'll make time for you after school tomorrow."

Tesfia compromised by making time for her tomorrow, gently reassuring the student.

From just that one line, the face of the student lit up with smiles while saying "Thank you!" with a bag in her hands.

"Alice, let's go"

Beside her, Alice was looking restless and with a sigh nodded.

Normally it wasn't possible for a single student to reserve the entire practice arena.

That's why even for Ars, it was a special one-time favor. In the spacious practice arena, there were spectator seats located on the second floor, and in the corner of his eye Ars could see the figure of the chairman trying to conceal herself while peeping which wasn't that odd. He said nothing, as he wasn't obligated to say anything.

Even if you call it concealing, Ars knew fully too well that she was there. In short, she was hiding herself in consideration for Tesfia and Alice.

And one more matter.

Ars also felt the gaze present during his practice match. In other words they were a puppet of the chairman.

"Are you seriously thinking about doing this?"

Perhaps it may be indisputable that the Faver family holds great power and influence. Tesfia's herself held a rank that supported the notion.

Magic power and magic skill does not depend on lineage. The children of gifted mages themselves might not be gifted. And vice versa. Maybe a certain extent of talent was inheritable, but most outstanding mages owe it to their parents who raised them in an environment suitable for someone with such talent. Depending on one's foundations, their total amount of magic power would be

Depending on one's foundations, their total amount of magic power would be different. The more talent one had the more elite one could become, but even without talent or sense one could become the same with the correct knowledge.

"I've kept you waiting."

Tesfia had finished changing into her practice clothes and approached while holding a katana in one hand.

Ars has also finished changing. However there wasn't really a need to change their clothes. It was just something decided in the heat of the moment during

their quarrel.

As if to ascertain that there were no spectators, Tesfia and Alice glanced around at their surrounds and looked slightly dubious.

All of the main actors have arrived, so the chairman should've already locked the entrances by now.

"It's a little unusual having no one around."

She let that comment spill out maybe because the arena was always being used.

"Anyways, let's get started."

Since the arena wasn't split into different sections this time, they could use the entire area, and Tesfia was already imagining the scene of Ars groveling at her feet with a smirk on her face.

However her smile gradually changed to a more sullen face as she raised her eyebrows and veins of anger started forming on her face. Tesfia's gaze fell towards Ars.

Specifically the pamphlet held in Ars's hand.

"What are you trying to do?"

"Don't mind me."

"You intend to make fun of me to the very end, don't you?"

Alice was standing in between both of them, and moved out of their way slightly.

"There are some terms before we start. If I win, don't interfere with me anymore."

"That's if you win. If you'd like, I'll even help you with your homework."

"No thank you. And, if you win?"

"Naturally, I'll get you to apologize."

"Alright."

He had already apologized once, but it seemed to be more a matter of sincerity.

By the means of Alice's magic, a loud ring of a buzzer that signaled the start of

their match echoed throughout the arena.

— At the same time Tesfia unsheathed her katana and ran towards him in a straight line. Comparing her to his classmate that he had faced earlier today in practical battle lesson, there was clearly a difference in just physical ability. Ars held the rolled up pamphlet in his right hand and covered it with magic.

There was criteria for measuring the strength of a mage. One of those would be their AWR. As an assistance weapon, AWR's were very strong but without exception all of them were made from rare materials. Something with high magic conductivity. By mixing this material with the core of a weapon, you would be able to raise it's magic conductivity. Also by writing magic formulas over it, it would be able to assist you when using difficult magic.

Ars's paper roll wasn't an AWR, but that doesn't mean that it could not conduct magic, only that it was difficult to do so. Naturally, as it didn't have any magic engravings on it, it would not be of any assistance when using magic. Even though it's called conductivity, it's necessary to cover your weapon in magic just like how he did to his roll of paper.

The form and shape of the magic that covered the object was another criteria to measure one's skill by.

However this could only be used as criteria to measure the skill of people up to 3 digits. 2 digit mages would already have perfect control and execution. That's why in this case, it was the perfect way to measure the ability of Tesfia who's rank was in the 4 digits.

They were already in the middle of a the match.

Tesfia's katana was just as he presumed, a blade of high quality. However, her skill couldn't keep up with the brilliance of her blade. Currently it could be said to be a waste of a treasure.

The magic that covered the blade when compared to other students would be considered on a higher level. Even the amount of magic was large for someone with a 4 digit rank. However it was obvious that the blade was clad in too much magic as it's shape was distorted.

The bare minimum amount of magic needed of a 2 digit rank mage was not a lot, but what mattered was the intensity and strength of it. On the contrary the weaker the sharpness is, the more inexperienced the user would be. And in

order to not waste any magic, one would finely mold their magic around their blade.

In Tesfia's case, she was more likely to smash someone as if using a blunt weapon rather than slicing with a blade due to her magic.

The ruined blade would be of no use in the outside world, even if it was an AWR.

"Haaaaaa!!"

Ars without even trying to dodge received the blade which swung down upon him.

As a smug expression appeared on her face——

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"---!!"
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Tesfia was surprised when her blade was stopped as she swung downwards. Alice who was standing a good distance away had the same reaction. Her sharp sword was stopped by just a simple pamphlet. And in addition to that, there wasn't a single scratch on it.

Ars waited until Tesfia came back to her senses.

He had no choice but to deliver divine retribution upon Tesfia who had carelessly treated his all-important precious documents. For that reason, a school pamphlet suited the job perfectly.

As Tesfia regained her senses from the shock, she quickly jumped backwards and opened up a distance.

"That's impossible!! That can't be ordinary paper!"

"No... it's just paper. You must've also received one, a school pamphlet that is." "——!!"

Ars spread open the pamphlet and showed her. On the front was a picture of the school building.

"That's a lie! There's no way a scrap of paper can defend against my attack." "I just blocked it didn't I?"

As her temper boiled, she clenched her blade tightly.

"Impossible!"

No matter how much magic you cover ordinary paper in there was a limit to it's durability, and it would definitely lose in terms of power against Tesfia's blunt blade. That would be the case for a normal mage.

It would be almost an impossible task to imbue paper that wasn't even an AWR with magic. This sort of aberrant technique was what earned him a spot as a Single Mage.

Immediately Tesfia raised her weapon and came charging in for the second time.

However, no matter how many times Tesfia swung her blade, Ars defended against them all with his pamphlet.

She then raised her blade.

1111

Tesfia who was trying to make large swings in close combat was full of openings.

Ars wasn't so patient to keep on stopping her blows.

"---!"

Ars's pamphlet magnificently made contact with Tesfia's face. A cry tore through the air full of tension and echoed throughout the stadium.

The strike wasn't like it was made of paper, and had the weight and coldness of a blunt weapon.

Tesfia was blown through the air and tumbled across the ground as she fell down. Her disheveled red hair was spread all over the ground.

"FIA!!"

Alice instinctively called out towards Tesfia who had rolled several times before stopping.

It wasn't a strike with the strength of paper. The power of the blow that blew Tesfia away could be comparable to a strike against a demon.

Alice, as the only spectator in this arena realized that the attack wasn't due to magic. There was no chant and no trace of any magic flow.

It was all due to the strength of a rolled up pamphlet that it's strike was able to send a person flying away.

He felt guilty about striking a woman's face but the practice arena would convert all physical harm into mental harm, leaving no wounds or traces. More than anything else, there were no differences between males or females who aimed to become mages. He would not go easy on someone who aspired to become a mage, even if they were female.

- 1. そこに魔力が通っていることは疑いようがないのだが、魔力そのものというわけではない It says that it IS magic going back and forth but not magic ITSELF. ↑
- 2. Idiom here to say that everyone would conform and go along with the wishes of people that are stronger than them, gain their favor *etc*. (In this case suck up to Alice and Tesfia) \(\triangle \)

Chapter 5: True Identity

There was silence.

As Alice rushed towards Tesfia advancing step by step—

Tesfia who had not moved an inch slightly moved her hand. She gradually lifted up her head and frailly stood up.

As she stood up using her katana as support, she rubbed her cheek with a gaze of disbelief.

She probably still wasn't aware of the situation. Tesfia's head was in chaos trying to process what had happened and that she had collapsed on the ground.

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"Are you alright, Fia?"
".....Y-yes"
```

She was blown magnificently through the air, but she should've no damage at all. After all she was hit with a pile of paper, and no matter how much mana you cover it in there was a limit to it's strength.

As Tesfia was thinking about what had happened during the middle of the match, she scowled at Ars and opened her mouth.

"What did you do"

"I just tapped you lightly with this pamphlet"

"Don't joke around, it wasn't paper. It felt like I was hit by something hard...."

Once again, Tesfia caresses her face and boils with anger.

You could confirm a mage's use of magic from visible light rays that it would emit. Just like how Tesfia's blade was covered in a dim pale light which shows that mana was running through it. The pamphlet that hit Tesfia was also covered in mana, which was why it was able to defend against her attacks with strength normally impossible for a roll of paper.

However from Tesfia's point of view it really did seem like she was hit by a piece of paper. Because it actually was a paper pamphlet that hit her.

The truth was with Ars's level of efficiency, there was no way first year students or even 4 digit mages would've realized what he had done.

He only covered the pamphlet in mana just before it made contact which caused it to be as hard as stone.

It was a wonderful performance that showcased the difference between their skill levels.

"You would understand if you read that book that you hit out of my hands earlier today."

Ars declared as if blaming her. The book that Tesfia hit was something that researchers spent many years working on, and was the fruit of their efforts. To desecrate their wisdom was an unforgivable sin for mages.

"Ugh....."

"Willing to surrender now?"

"I don't know what you did, but don't get full of yourself from just hitting me once"

"Fia! Isn't it enough already..."

Alice warned her, but as expected Tesfia didn't pay heed to what she said. The amount of mana leaking from her body grew alongside her anger.

"What are you talking about, Alice? He managed to land a blow on me by chance, I'll defeat him immediately"

Tesfia took a deep breath and held her blade in front of her. She traced two fingers down the blade with flowing movements.

As she finished tracing her fingers down the blade, the magical characters on her blade lit up.

"Fia, that's overkill!!"

Alice guessed what Tesfia was planning to do. Her words did not reach Tesfia as she continued to glide her fingers all the way over it to the edge of the blade.

Tesfia pointed her blade horizontally, and concentrated mana on the tip of the blade. From Tesfia's own body through the AWR, a light began to gradually shine.

All the mana concentrated at one point as if it was absorbing all mana from the surroundings.

—With a crackling sound a giant block of ice was formed midair. As the blade

was lightly swung downwards, it broke the surface of the ice block and a large transparent sword was formed.

"[Icicle • Sword]"

It was the first time seeing it, but the unique magic was well known as it was recorded down in encyclopedias. However, it was still his first time seeing it in person.

"That's amazing"

Ars praised the technology that created the block of ice, which acted as the mold for the ice blade. It wasn't completely suited to killing as there were unnecessary parts on the blade, but it held a charm that captivated all spectators. More than anything else, it was a direct compliment towards her as normal freshman would not be able to use such magic.

Without any sign of her hearing his compliment, Tesfia without a word pointed the tip of the blade towards Ars and charged directly towards him.

She was fast, but to Ars it was a sluggish and simple attack. Which is why it would be easy to dodge.

This practice match which could also be considered a duel was where he had no choice but to punish Tesfia for desecrating humanities precious wisdom without any interference.

It would probably be safe to say that this was Tesfia's strongest magic. As proof, you could see her shoulders sway up and down tired from spending so much mana.

He calmly faced her straight on.

It wasn't as if this was a gamble. For Ars this level of magic wasn't something he couldn't handle.

"No!—— Avoid it!"

With a pale face Alice called out. She tried chanting a protective magic, but for this generation of mages who were used to using AWRs her speed wouldn't make it in time. Her incantation which was cut in half changed into an anguished cry.

Ars took a small breath.

He concentrated all his senses on his hand which formed a blade. He would form a sharp blade made out of strong steel that could cut through everything. The mana that covered his hand grew, and at the tip of his hand formed a blade made out of mana. He formed a blade that was constantly flowing with mana, a blade sharp enough to even slice through time.

At the moment of collision, Alice looked downwards and waited for the outcome with an expressionless face as if the result was obvious from how Tesfia had overdone it.

The result that both girls expected didn't occur.

Alice opened her eyes not because she wanted to see what she had expected to happen, but because she didn't hear the crushing sound of blade on body.

Ars was in front of Tesfia standing there composed and calm. Behind him was the ice blade split evenly into two.

The mana which held the shape of the blade was unable to do so anymore, and fine cracks appeared all over the blade. It didn't break into pieces as cracks appeared, but rather dispersed back to mana.

Alice let out her astonishment, while Alice had a dumbfound expression on her face.

What did Ars do? The only person who understood was probably the chairman who was spectating from quite a distance away.

Mana is the resource for using magic*. However to use mana itself as an attack not in the form of magic was outside of common sense.

Mages tend to use existing magic, choosing not to create their own. This was because it was the most common method. To defeat demons was the role of a mage, and the research of magic to combat demons were the roles of scholars and researchers. Therefore mages left understanding unknown phenomenon to others.

What Ars did was a precise magical maneuver. It was the same idea as covering weapons with magic.

Basically if you cover a weapon with mana, what comes into contact is still the mana that covers the weapon, so using that logic one could extend mana

independently to form a blade made out of mana. However this method wasn't widely known at all. It was a loophole Ars discovered.

Mana that was used on organic matter to produce a blade made out of mana was realistically impossible. However Ars had wisdom about this unique magic all to himself. Roughly speaking it was something that destroyed the characteristics of mana, and by layering mana upon itself organic matter would lose it's characteristic of absorbing mana and function as if it was an inorganic substance. It was a technique to transform the characteristics of substances, which you could use mana to form or shape it.

However.....

You would have to control the mana that was constantly being produced inside your body, which would require someone to be able to use such a technique. Ars would probably be the only person who could do that. Because it wasn't how mana was normally supposed to be used.

As the energy that fueled all applications and uses of magic, mana was not something people normally studied about as most mages concentrated on learning magic.

That's why the girls didn't notice anything.

He used the pamphlet in his left hand to lightly tap his shoulders. Almost as if it was to signal that this was the end of their duel .

Ars didn't really want to hurt Tesfia. He just wanted to teach her reality, to shatter her pride.

That's why he would end it simple. Because one simple line could demonstrate it's power of reconciliation.

```
"It was my bad."
"———!!"
```

Tesfia who was confronted with a sudden apology was surprised and lost for words.

It wasn't as if he was admitting his defeat. It was just a simple apology. Tesfia herself knew best who was the winner and loser in this match. Which was why there was no need to say it out aloud.

"I don't mean for this to insult you, but if what you said was the case then I

apologize for it."

It was an apology from the bottom of one's heart, as Ars walked in front of Tesfia and bowed deeply. It was an action that solved all this misunderstanding, and with this everything should be settled. He settled for Tesfia's pride as compensation and since both side's demands were fulfilled, he was able to settle this matter without any potential further disputes.

".....I, is that so? I'm also sorry for being so stubborn"

Although it may not seem like it, Tesfia was originally a very understanding and sensible person.

Which is why Ars chose this method to conclude it all.

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"Then, I'll excuse myself now."
"Wai-....."
```

As he tried to pass Tesfia, she grasped his sleeve and he turned around slightly annoyed.

```
"What?"
".... How did you do it"
```

Tesfia timidly averted her gaze from him and asked. It was almost an unspoken agreement to not pry into other classmate's magic. Since she was just an apprentice mage, her voice was lacking any force.

Tesfia wasn't the only person with questions as Alice also approached the two and strained her ears trying to hear into their conversation without saying anything.

He tried to pull his arm away two or three times, but she must've been gripping his sleeve fiercely as she didn't budge.

Ars wondering what to do shifted his gaze towards the spectator seats. He didn't expect anything much, but this was a decision he couldn't make himself. Because further prying from the two of them might reveal his rank if he spoke too much.

As if aware of the situation, the chairman appeared as if she was there the entire time while applauding.

There was no doubt that Tesfia and Alice turned their eyes towards the clapping

chairman.

""Chairman!!""

She stopped clapping, and leapt down over the railing from a height of three floors. She landed softly on the ground and stood up gently.

"As one would expect of the Faver house's daughter, I was treated to a high level practice match."

She was the chairman of the school, but also a figure of admiration of any person who desired to become a mage.

Ars couldn't tell what the chairman planned to do.

As if to dispell his concerns, Cisty-chairman approached them.

"To be able to use such high level magic despite being a first year" Thank you very much. But why are you here, chairman?"

It was an obvious question. Tesfia was wearing a bitter face after recognizing her defeat, but it couldn't be helped that it changed to a look of glee as she was praised by a former single rank.

"That's because Ars-kun made a request to reserve the practice arena. I came to spectate"

"---!!! Chairman!"

Ars panicked for a moment as he was exposed.

This time their gazes were concentrated on Ars, as even the chairman's gaze was laid upon him.

"Ars Reigin, was it? What are you? To be able to slice my [Icicle Sword] in half"

"That's to be expected of him. What I came here for was to ensure the safety of you girls."

Ars decided to leave all the talking to the chairman who was smiling. In the first place the order to hide his rank was from the academy, Ars himself personally didn't really care about it. As long as he had his free time. But he had a uncomfortable feeling at how this conversation was going.

"What do you mean!?"

Tesfia was the one the one trying find out what was going on, but suddenly Alice had crept up beside them and asked the question they were wondering.

"Well, it might be faster if I show you"

The chairman turned around to face Ars and pulled out a card from her bosom.

```
"Is that a licence?"

"Mm-hmm, this came from the military today morning for you."

"......"
```

Alice who had asked the chairman about her question thought that she would get a more direct answer, and was slightly confused when they mentioned "military".

Ars could guess what she wanted to do. Which is why he wasn't surprised when the chairman handed over the card and touched the ranking entry on it.

```
""----!!""
```

A bright stream of mana leaked out of the licence card and a crystal-like display was projected.

1. Mana is the resource that magic uses. To clarify older chapters, basically the body constantly generates mana which can then be used for magic.

Chapter 6: The Teacher from the Battle Faction

Projected in 3D off the thin card is an incomparable singles digit, 1/119550.

Tesfia speaks out on reflex, "No way!!"

Alice can't utter a sound, "- - - !!"

Cisty says, "Do you understand?"

Tesfia points at Arus's face while saying to the broad chairman, "...Ehh... eh, this guy's... but..." A singles magician. Out of the 100,000 magicians, only 9 possess that status. The first rank, out of all of them, is the strongest. That apex of magicians is right before them. It's so ridiculous, she can't even bring herself to groan

"Fufuu... What a nice reaction. I was just as surprised when I read his profile."

Tisfia continues to point at Arus's face. "Ehh, but... same age..." Students enroll within the academy to devote themselves to learning magic. Nobles like Tisfia tend to be exceptions. In that vein, Arus is an even bigger exception. The average student truly begins to bloom as a magician only after graduating.

She can't believe that a single's magician is the same age as her, yet the first two characters on Arus's license provide overwhelming evidence to that fact. Any lingering quarks and leptons of doubt are dispelled by the board chairman's confirmation.

Alice's reaction on the other hand makes Arus curious. She, unlike Tisfia who can't manage a single decent word, is already recovering some of her composure. He speaks to her, but not with any intention of boasting, "Alice, you aren't surprised?"

"...Eh, yes! What?"

She's plenty surprised. Her words are crushed.

He says, "Don't be so uptight. It's too troublesome."

Her expression crumbles into one of embarrassment as she says, "...Go-got it!" It is, however, still a bit stiff.

Cisty says, "Arus-kun is somewhat of an exception. I don't know what the cause of this dispute was, but he has left behind many achievements on the front lines... his values are probably quite different from your own."

Tisfia continues glaring at Arus with suspicion despite the board chairman's words. Whether her words had any affect is doubtful because she continues to stab him with the same hostility from before the board chairman arrived.

Arus disregards Tisfia's behavior and says, "Board chairman, weren't you the one who wanted me to conceal my position?"

"I've changed my mind. I believe it might be better if you could teach these two." Her tone suggests that she based her decision off of a whim that said to hell with reason. She adds, "You two aren't to reveal this to the other students or teachers."

Alice gives an immediate, "I understand," while Tisfia gives a delayed, "...Yes." Cisty continues, "Arus-kun, why are you a student here?"

The question is sudden, but he already has an answer. He's being asked so the other two can hear it. He says, "So I can take it easy."

""....!!""

Cisty releases an, "I know how you feel," sigh. Arus's achievements are abnormal. Even she struggles to grasp them all. In the current era, adulthood is legally recognized at 16 years. Magicians are recognized as such upon graduating from the academy. In other words, the definition of what is a child has fluctuated many times over the years due to the mamono rampaging in the outside world.

Therefore, there is nothing abnormal about Arus's life. The upper echelons of the military are thinking about defense and reclamation. They do not have the leeway needed to allow a powerful magician like him to stand idle. Arus, having high magical talent, was raised with military training and education and deployed for combat.

Cisty doubts his request for retirement will be approved. When she received the notification that the military is enrolling Arus into the 2nd magic academy, she was also ordered to encourage him to return to the battlefield. She was told

that she needed to make him understand that he had to return for the sake of humanity.

She hit her desk with indignation at the request. Even though her academy produces many excellent magicians for that exact reason, the pigheaded brass want to pin their hopes on a sole, superior, magician. At the same time, there is no denying that many of her students have been spared from having to journey to dangerous zones thanks to him. The sharp decline in deceased magicians leaves her unable to fully express her feelings.

Cisty understands Arus's arguments. It's one that would embarrass adults. Therefore, she chooses to brush aside her instructions from the military and whisper something else into Arus's ear. She embraces him from behind and wraps her arms tight around his body. She creates a lascivious sight, but Arus isn't swayed. She blows her sweet voice into his ear, but his expression remains indifferent.

Tisfia and Alice pinch their lips. They lack the courage to impose on the secret talk between singles magicians[1] (they pay respect to their principle, Cisty).

Cisty says, "Instead of just researching, couldn't you also relax by making those girls stronger?"

Arus makes a wry smile. So that's true reason the she revealed my rank to them.

Cisty's plan is also out of self-interest. Regardless of how promising the two girls are, they cannot replace Arus. If the military insists on his return, then to encourage him even just a little, he should discover what he's fighting for.

The empathy Cisty feels for Arus stems from her time in the military... from when they first met nine years ago. Arus was very young and doesn't seem to remember her. Also, since it is a bad memory, she intentionally hasn't reminded him of their encounter either.

Arus glances at Tesfia and Alice. He admits that they do possess a remarkable level of talent. They could even give a fight to a third year who's ready to become a magician. However... "That's no good. I wouldn't be able to relax training them."

"And I was hoping you'd be able to graduate from this academy like everyone else."

Even though Arus doesn't want to cut time from his research, listening to the board chairman may improve his ability to relax. ".....What do you want me to do?"

"Teach them how to fight in actual combat."

"That's impossible. I don't have that type training."

Arus isn't being humble. The ability to teach isn't a skill most people, unlike the board chairman, naturally possess.

Cisty holds him tighter as she presses her lip close to his ear. Her words roll within her sweet breath as she says, "That's alright. No one can match your combat skills."

Tesfia and Alice blush at the sight.

I'm not being forced, but I'm also not being allowed to refuse.

Arus's only option is folding. Not only shouldn't he antagonizing the board chairman of the academy, she's also currently holding him in place and thus, wasting his research time. Besides, he can't picture Tesfia being civil and requesting him to teach her. He says, "I can do it during the breaks between my research."

The arm squeezing against Arus loosens as Cisty says, "I thought you'd say so." That exchange establishes the hierarchy within the academy.

Now, although Arus is still quite young, he does consider himself somewhat competent in bargaining. However, thanks to the board chairman, his condition with Tesfia that she no longer meddle in his affairs has been annulled.

Arus says, "Can I leave now?" He wants to leave a soon as possible to keep from wasting any more time.

Cisty says, "Give it your best."

Arus, fed up with everything, says, "....My best?" while returning the rolled up brochure to her. He then walks towards the door.

Tesfia and Alice watch him walk off from around Cisty's sides. Tesfia opens her mouth to speak, but no words come out. She then turns towards the board chairman and says, "That's the world's number one?"

A soliloquy flows from Tesfia's mouth. She criticizes Arus's decision to withdraw from the front lines to relax as negligent. — — A wave of bloodlust freezes her in place. The former single's magician known as the Witch envelops her with her bloodlust aura.

Arus continues walking. He views the bloodlust rolling against his back as a childish outburst.

Tesfia, and Alice, however, back away in fear. They can't see the board chairman's expression, but instinctively understand that she's angry. They don't know why, and can't figure it out.

Cisty herself is who breaks the tension. She speaks with a bitter smile. "He has various circumstances. If you're aiming to be top magicians, then you should ask him to teach you. He's only refusing to use magic because of our silly agreement."

Tesfia is unable to rejoice at the board chairman's words, but she can't hate them either. The board chairman is much better at making her feel awful than he is.

Alice, however, "Eh! It's really alright?"

"—!! Alice, you want that guy to teach you?"

"Isn't this great? We get to be taught by the strongest magician."

To receive instruction from the reigning top magician would require an unbelievable amount of luck. Even double digit magicians would have trouble entering such a relationship. Just getting to meet such a person would require earning enough military merits to fill an entire jacket.

Tesfia says, "That's true, but..."

Tesfia has confidence in herself. Her goal is to achieve a rank that won't bring shame to her noble name. The dream of becoming a single's magician isn't

within her sight, but that of a double digit magician is.

There is no denying that this is an excellent opportunity, but it somehow doesn't feel right. The caustic words of the singles magician before her left a gap in her heart. Right now she's 100 steps away... but could easily advance 2 or 3 steps by reaching out her hand.

Cisty says, "I don't intent to force you, but you'd undoubtedly be able to obtain something from him."

Tesfia speaks with unwavering confidence. "Can't you teach us?" Arus is a student just like her. She truly doubts he'd be able to teach them.

"I am a busy person. Are you really going to let this chance slip by!?"

"Of course... not."

Tesfia answers such, but isn't sure as to what she said.

-Not Cute Star, but Noble Diamond... is what should be here-

Arus searches his room for documents upon returning. He'll immerse himself in research to make up for lost time.

The board chairman wants me to teach them how to fight. Arus isn't enthusiastic about the idea. On the contrary, he begrudges the task. Even if he did teach them, it might be rendered moot. If the goal is training magicians to fight, then training magicians who can fight mamono is much more efficient. That's something Arus himself experienced.

Magicians with powerful spells being trampled down by a grotesque mamono is very common. Their fear of death keeps them from being able to fight back. Magicians are numerous, but only half of them possess the spirit to fight mamono.

Magicians must always remain calm. Regardless of how desperate a situation becomes, it only truly becomes hopeless the moment they stop believing in themselves. *Magicians who can't cast magic are immature...* No, are defective.

Still, regardless of their aptitude, polishing will make their magic shine.

He hates himself for making such a promise without consideration the circumstances. Furthermore, he doubts he'll be able to relax by doing this. "I

give up."

Tesfia won't come, but Alice, 8 to 9 times out of 10, will come. How annoying.

1 I get the feeling this is an idiom. I get the feeling I misunderstood it. テスフィアとアリスが一桁魔法師の内緒話に口を挟めるほど度胸は据わっていない(主にシスティに敬意を払ってのことだ

Chapter 7: The Consequences of Leaking a Secret

Arus enters his classroom the next day, and just like yesterday, is showered with rude stares. The chattering voices that could be heard up until he opened the door fall silent. This, however, is only limited to the male student body. The female students have a better awareness over where their priorities should lie. It's a striking manifestation of the difference in attitude towards magic between men and women. Either way, this is much better than having to deal with outright harassment. Tesfia's eyes are also mixed within the glares, but Arus ignores it. Not having her enmity is already a good harvest.

Arus is hopeful in wishing for the present atmosphere to be nothing more than his imagination. Regardless, he doesn't deviate from his pace. He remains unperturbed by everyone's glares and begins studying.

The day's lessons mostly consist of classroom work. He, however, isn't interested in the lectures. Furthermore, shifting classrooms at the end of each lesson is tedious. Therefore, he selected his classes in a way that keeps him from transferring rooms as much as possible.

The third lesson, it's the lesson before lunch, should Arus consider himself fortunate or unfortunate? *Definitely unfortunate*. Every class so far has been shared with Tesfia and Alice. During them, Tesfia would glance, *chira chira*, at him. Each time, those glances pierced through the line of students between them.

Arus isn't bothered by the severity of her glances, but he is getting irritated.

"Hey!" The teacher unfortunately misunderstands Arus's reaction to Tesfia for himself. It's a very unfortunate connection. His eyes drop down to the register of names as he says, "You... you're Arus-kun... I believe." Convinced with his conclusion, he points to the liquid crystal display and adds, "Well then, Arus-kun, your answer?"

Lectures related to mamono are conducted by reproducing their grotesque appearance on screens. Arus, having not paid attention since class began, can't even guess the question. At any rate, this class covers the basics of the basics.

This situation isn't a problem for him with his abundance of knowledge. From what Arus can surmise, the lecture revolves around the emergence of mamono and the danger they present. He places a bookmark in his book as he stands and says, "Mamono suddenly appeared 100 years ago. Despite the various theories in regards to their origins, mankind has not been able to acquire positive proof for any of them. We've only recently become able to deal with the mamono invasion with magic. As a result, the magic military division has been able to strike back against the mamono invasion. The strength of mamono is classified through 8 ranks, F – SS. The SS rank was only confirmed 50 years ago."

Arus, not knowing the question, assumes his response is enough for beginners and sits down. The teacher, however, is dissatisfied and says, "That's insufficient." The projection on the liquid crystal screen changes to depict several different types of mamono. Included at the end of each picture is a subjugation title.

Arus sighs. Anything more would be too difficult for beginners to comprehend... The teacher shouldn't be losing control of the lesson's progress.

The teacher is no longer instructing students, but is instead focused solely on Arus. Within that teacher's heart burns a belligerent attitude.

Arus continues in a tone lacking in respect for his teacher. "The military dispatches double digit, triple digit, and quadruple digit magicians to subjugate mamono depending on their rank. The standard squad is almost always composed of at least four members. That number is hypothesized to be the minimal amount required for responding to unpredicted situations. When against an A rank mamono, the majority of the squad will consist of double digit magicians. B and C rank mamono are often assigned squads of triple digit magicians with a double digit magician as a commanding officer. Lower ranked mamono are typically dealt with by triple digit magicians."

His classmates stare at him with rapt attention. They're dumbfounded by his open disrespect.

Only the teacher's cheeks twitch as he[1] grinds his teeth. "Well, what about the single digits? Please tell us the criteria needed for the deployment of a Singles Magician."

No one can tell whether the teacher is frantically trying to preserve his dignity as a teacher or is just venting his frustration. Information regarding Singles Magicians is concealed from the public. Not even the military is privileged with such information, much less students. An active Singles Magician, however, wouldn't have any trouble answering.

Tesfia directs a gaze full of curiosity towards Arus. Alice also turns her body towards him in hopes of hearing his reply.

Arus says, "Only the governor can exert command over Singles Magicians. Furthermore, there are only 9 Singles Magicians and each one is considered to have the ranking of a general. Since subjugation missions are wasted on them, they are treated as a commando unit that's allowed to move freely. When they are deployed, it's for subjugating mamono of S rank or higher. Another discrepancy is that Singles Magicians are tasked with the duty of expanding the country's territory."

The teacher's gapping mouth prove to Arus that his explanation is faultless. He then directs his gaze to the mamono rankings being displayed on the screen and continues, "In regards to what you asked earlier, mamono consume mana[2] to increase their strength. As a result, they target humans with mana. Furthermore, mamono also possess the ability to generate their own mana. Cannibalism amongst themselves isn't rare. Now, as mentioned, mamono are said to be ranked according to 8 stages, but there are special mamono that are given a mutation rank.

"These mamono are created through the assimilation of two or more mamono. In rare cases, they can also be born through cannibalism and the consumption of humans. Giving these mamono an accurate rank is difficult, therefore, a conjecture is calculated by adding up the ranks of the combined mamono. In other words, an injured mamono will be consumed by another mamono to raise its rank."

Arus continues, now adding extra detail. "Low ranked mamono continuously partake in cannibalism to absorb mana and change their rank. High ranked mamono are not wary against the protective wall. [Babel] stands at the center of the seven countries and prevents mamono from invading them by maintaining the protective wall, yet with each passing year, the wall weakens..."

The slip in Arus's lecture garners the attention of everyone in the classroom. That's probably a secret that not even teacher knows about.

Arus says, "Sensei, is this enough?"

"...Ye-yeah, please have a seat."

Arus maintains his usual composure as he reseats himself. Astonished voices can be heard leaking out around him.

Babel's protective wall which prevents a mamono invasion gets weaker every year. The wall enlarges in proportion with the expansion of new territory. The outcome? The protective wall weakens.

Weak mamono have long since been unable to approach the wall. Now with the wall gradually wilting, B rank mamono have been appearing. That report is one with which very few people in the military are privileged. Granted, not a single magician hasn't noticed the increase in their dispatches, but no one talks about it.

Arus only revealed half of that information before stopping. Those unfamiliar with him can brush off his revelation as a joke. As for those familiar with him, Tesfia and Alice pale. Even though Arus's gaze suggests that leaving the subject alone and letting it work itself out is fine, Tesfia grabs his sleeve once the lesson ends and drags him to the rooftop. Alice too clings to him from behind. SOme of the girls watching let out, Kya kya, fufufu," as they watch from the side. This development[3] is nothing more than another quarrel between Tesfia and Arus.

Tesfia forces the rooftop door open and drives Arus ahead. She and Alice stand with the door to their backs to keep him from escaping. They are lucky to have gone to the rooftop immediately after class ended because it is empty.

Tesfia says, "What did you mean by that earlier?"

Arus isn't frustrated despite being forced to come to the rooftop. It's the consequence of him talking too much. "What did I mean on what?"

"Babel, earlier you said its protective wall is weakening."

Arus gets a headache just as he anticipated. His only option now is play dumb. "I said such a thing?"

Tesfia throws back her shoulders as she says, "You did!!"

Alice says, "Arus-kun, is that true?"

"Supposing it is, it still doesn't have anything to do with you."

Grief washes over Alice's face. Arus tried to blur the conversation, but she was still able to get her answer. Her chestnut colored hair sways with the breeze as she takes a gallant step forward and says, "We aren't unrelated. Our aim is to become magicians who battle against mamono..." Sorrow laces her words as she continues, "Don't speak in such lonely way."

Alice's remark towards the unmet and unknown is reckless. She lacks experience, knowledge, and acts with fleeting enthusiasm. *But it's too late to it back*.

Arus adopts a harsh tone to make her drop the idea. "And? It isn't a problem either of you can do anything about at the moment."

"Yes, but..."

Tesfia can only clench her teeth. There is nothing she can do now that she knows Arus's true strength. Regardless, "That's wrong!" She isn't recklessly picking another fight, but she does reject his way of thinking.

She points a finger at Arus and adds, "If there's no time, then leisurely spending three years at this academy makes us a disgrace to magicians. Shouldn't we spend every moment polishing our combat skills?"

In other words, she's frustrated. What she said wouldn't be a problem if she had the skill to back it up, but she's only seen mamono on paper. Her worry is a virtue born from not having her awareness poisoned through an encounter.

Tesfia says, "That's why, let's fight the mamono together."

"No way." Arus replies on reflex.

""————!!""

An onlooker might think that Tesfia said something impressive, but that isn't how people ask for favors. Since she chose that method of asking as a way to hide her embarrassment, Arus rejected her without a trace of hesitation.

Confusion fills Tesfia's eyes. The term baka~n[4] is the perfect adjective for her.

Alice says, "Arus-kun, please!"

"... Thinking about it, the chairman did ask."

Tesfia jumps at how Alice's reply leaves room for consideration while she was flat out rejected. "— — —!! Hey! Why's Alice's different!?"

"You're an aristocrat. Don't you know the proper way to ask for favors?"

Tesfia's spirit douses at being reprimanded on her etiquette. "Uhh....." Her reaction is proof that she doesn't take his words as an insult to her nobility.

"First of all, I'm sacrificing my time for you!"

Tesfia and Alice are the top two students of their grade, but not even that is enough for them to talk back to a Singles Magician.

Alice's upturned eyes water as they're struck by dazzling sun shine. She says, "...But, the chairman would find out..." Her strangely gentle approach is quite crafty.

"....." What she said about the chairman is correct. I should have considered the ramifications of this task more before accepting it.

Arus says, "Yeah... I did say that... well, fine." He adheres to Alice's request, and then turns to the red-haired girl who's puffing her cheeks. He wants a redo. "Now then, what about you?"

"Ha!?" Tesfia corrects her posture a beat late. Her cheeks redden as she glances to the side. She then places a hand upon her chest and takes a breath, "fuu~" Then, as she exhales, she draws in a leg and lowers her head. "Would you please accept me..?" She then looks up and stares at him with glittering, upturned, eyes.

Arus stares at Tefia without any emotion on his face. "......"

What a farce. It feels like something terrible is brewing. Tesfia glances to the side and turns red after tens of seconds. Is this wearing her out or is she getting embarrassed.

Tesfia's mouth trembles, waru waru, as she hesitates on whether she should say something or not. Yet, upon seeing Arus scratch his cheek while making a wry smile, she decides to hold her tongue.

Her watery eyes aren't enough for Arus to throw her a lifeboat. Instead of keeping his amazement sealed, he says, "Your sense of pride is pathetic."

Tesfia lifts her head with a, baa, and with little shame, shoots him a death glare.

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Arus says, "Kidding..."

"You, you're..."
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"Well, I said I'd watch over the two of you, but I'll be prioritizing my research. There is a limit to how useful you'll be as magicians after all."

Arus's unilateral remark is a heartless judgment for the two girls who are aiming to be magicians. Alice forces a smile as she scratches her cheek. "Haha..."

Tesfia is too willful to accept the comment. "What...?" A more accurate statement would be that she'll never be able to calm down unless she retorts. "We won't know that until we try it. We'll become strong enough to stand alongside you!" A weak question mark drifts at the end of her sentence.

Arus believes he's grown a bit from his previous experience and won't be as heavy handed this time. He doesn't hold back, and praises them by saying, "That isn't what I meant. The two of you are excellent magicians."

No greater honor could be given to Tesfia. "... Of course we are." Such self-confidant words are normal for the usual Tesfia, but the magician before her stands at the summit as number 1. His criticism shaking her self-worth is only natural.

Arus releases a sigh at Tesfia's assertion and adopts firm and clear tone. Indescribable anxiousness is laced among his words. "That wasn't what I meant. Being an excellent magician doesn't mean you'll be useful in actual combat. Neither of you have seen a mamono, right?"

Tesfia and Alice have seen mamono in educational materials, but that isn't

what Arus means. They can't not understand that and therefore, they both nod.

Their responses are also natural. They apply not just to them, but to all the students in the academy. When looked at from this perspective, all the boy and girls there are nothing more than hatchling magicians.

Defeating one mamono is enough to be considered a full-fledged magician. Actually, just getting to that point is a perilous journey in of itself. Defeating mamono isn't the only duty magicians have. This isn't something I should be thinking about right now.

He says, "Some are unable to wield magic upon actually encountering mamono. Once that happens, functioning as a magician becomes difficult. Therefore, even if I train you, the increase in your ranking will be limited."

Tesfia smiles as she says, "Haa... I don't care about stuff like that. Besides, we won't know until we try."

Arus's limited experience with comrades is skewed towards one from combat. Therefore, he remains silent to keep from stepping on the same mistake. He also doesn't care for how his words are taken.

Alice, unlike Tesfia, accepts them without a complaint since they come from the number 1 magician.

Magicians like Tesfia with high expectations of themselves are troublesome to deal with while those like Alice who lose before even fighting are useless.

Although this isn't a case about one being better than the other, the former are the ones who tend to die early.

Tesfia's arbitrary decision, "Let's start today!" gives Arus a headache. She deserves first place for that ability. *My time...*

Tesfia then says with some hesitation, "Arus, Alice." She sounds the words out as she repeats them to herself a few times and then says, "They're too similar."

What is that red haired girl going on about? Arus gets the feeling that he should return to his room as soon as he can, but he can't. The door before him is being blocked. He can only remain silent and hear what Tesfia has to say.

"Change your name. You and Alice are too easy to mix up."

Tesfia's request is unfathomable for people who've, at best, only known each other for two days.

Even Alice is taken aback. Her mouth hangs open in shock. She then makes a bitter smile and apologizes with her eyes. Even if he were to concede 100 steps, she'd rather I change my name. [5]

There isn't much Arus can say. Actually, rather than mediating the conversation with logic, he'd rather ignore the entire situation.

Tesfia says, "Say something."

Even just responding is a pointless effort. They've flipped positions.

Tesfia cups her chin as she ponders over the issue.

I'm getting a bad feeling about this...

Tesfia says, "Then, how about Al? Since you're Arus, you can be Al."

Arus is troubled on how to respond. "Even if you ask how..." No one refers to him through a nickname, although there was someone who did once. He was also called by his number during his time in the military, but his name was used a lot as well.

Alice says, "Yeah, I like it. Al-kun sounds a lot friendlier."

"Then, it's settled."

Alice's liking it was the deciding factor? Arus can't help but wonder if his presence was even necessary. Regardless, Alice's comment ends the topic. He says, "Alice, you don't have to refer to me with honorifics either."

Alice's face relaxes with a smile. None of the stiffness from yesterday is present. "Got it."

Arus mouths, "Al... huh?" in voice so soft, neither Tesfia nor Alice hear it. Only one syllable was removed, but the emotion invoked is indescribable. The feeling is both vexing and uncomfortable, and something he's never felt before. *Is it because we're the same age?*

Whatever the feeling is, he hates it. Still, he doesn't fully reject it. Is it possible to say that the solemnity of being number 1 was lost? There's a good feel to

that. Only Tesfia and Alice will be using that name.

Even though a lot of time doesn't seem to have passed, Tesfia spins for the doorknob while saying, "Ah, lunch!!" She then looks back and adds, "Thathanks, Al... looks we'll be troubling you."

Her voice is far from being cheerful, the flow could be improved with practice, and she got embarrassed saying the abbreviation she came up with. *Not using it at all would be fine...*

Tesfia looks forward again before anyone can comment and rushes through the door.

Alice puts her heels together, and with a face filled with joy, gives Arus a bow. She says, "Thank you, I guess we'll see you after school, Al."

"Alice, what's taking you? You're going to miss lunch if you don't hurry up!"

Alice follows after the voice with an, "I'm coming!"

Arus is left alone. "What a self-centered girl." Willfully pushing ahead until she achieves her aim.

If one were to have only seen how Tesfia and Alice left, that person would have, guaranteed, misunderstood the situation.

- [1] Sex of teacher is never specified. The manga showed a man, so I'm just going to keep it consistent until told otherwise.
- [2] The kanji translates into "magical power," but mana fits better here. I'll be translating it as such unless the situation forces otherwise.
- [3] It's a katakana onomonopia I can't figure out. It goes, "kyakkyaufufuu". 傍から見ればキャッキャウフフッな展開なのだろうが、テスフィアとアルスではまた揉め事かと思われたことだろう。
 - [4] It really ends with ~n.
 - [5] 百歩譲っても改名するなら俺じゃなくアリスのほうだろ

<< 1.6 The Teacher from the Battle Faction

Part 2: Exams

Chapter 1: Acknowledged as a Magician

Arus decides on dealing with the two, troublesome, first class, hatchlings[1] directly after school. Needless to say, his plans undergo a major transformation. He's already sacrificing sleep time for his brain. Furthermore, he can only skip 5 to 6 lectures at most. He doesn't, however, perceive missing class a sacrifice. He never considered attending them in the first place.

Arus looks through his bags in his room. "I'm positive I brought it with me...!!"

He stuffed it in an enormous box that could comfortably fit a person inside back when he transferred to the academy. Having always been on duty, he never had time to spare on fashion. He's also had zero interest in the matter. He's a talented individual, but he doesn't have many interests. *Too bad no one here would be interested in this stuff. No, this would be a mountain of treasure for anyone pursuing magic.*

An out of place object— one resembling garbage— sinks deeper without drawing attention to itself. It looks like a stick, one that could be found anywhere. Touching it, however, reveals that it isn't wood. It also gives people the sensation that they don't want to hold it.

"Bringing you with me was the right choice."

The item isn't completely his personal belonging. It was used as a training tool back when he was in the military. Therefore, while it resembles a stick, no one should be surprised that it isn't made of wood. It isn't a weapon either.

It is a salquroit[2] Arus made from the carcass of a mutated, estimated rank A, mamono that he killed. The custom made tool uses the properties of the mamono's shell to disrupt the flow of mana. It reacts to mana by emitting minute oscillations that scatters said mana.

This tool, more than aiding in the training for Tesfia and Alice, will grant Arus precious time. The training menu is offhanded, but it's also *force majeure*[3].

-Imagine a Nobel Diamond conga line here-

Chimes curtain the day's ruthless session of classes. Regardless, the academy's students are highly motivated. Even with the lectures over, nearly zero return home. The single, most lively, place for them to gather is the training grounds. Students assemble there regardless of their year. Yesterday's assembly was limited to only three people $+\alpha$ because of the strange circumstance where the entire area was reserved.

All students need to reserve a place in advanced. Third year students, who are on the brisk of becoming magicians, are given priority treatment. Many students also watch from the spectator seats. They use the opportunity to study the magic techniques of their *senpai*. As a result, the spectators are predominantly composed of first years.

Tesfia and Alice proceed to the training grounds with such circumstances in place, yet find it completely divided among the upper classmen.

Having already changed into their training clothes, they can only stare and find that not a single area remains open. Tesfia says, "Ahre!?" as she and Alice drop their AWR.

Their arrival gathers the crossfire of everyone's attention. Many students stop moving their hands simply because of their appearance. They either stare because of their admiration at the arrival of two beautiful girls or because of how out of place they seem at the filled training grounds.

Tesfia denounces Arus and his position as number 1 with a bitter smile, "No way, did that guy actually run away?" Her word choice in "that guy" however stems from being too embarrassed to call him "Al."

Alice says, "That can't be right. He probably just couldn't reserve a space."

"Yeah, well where the heck is he?" If not for the quarrel that broke between them, she'd be referring to him with respect like Alice.

Alice can only tilt her head in response to the question. "....."

A new research building was established earlier that school year. It isn't too far from the school and occupies a vast area of land. Seemingly assigned to there are newly hired teachers. As a result, students have little opportunity to

approach the building.

Tesfia and Alice reach the building's top floor after a great deal of time. Figuring out where Arus goes when he skips class was harder than they thought it would be. The first place they tried was naturally the boy's dormitory, but upon asking the receptionist for Arus's room number, were told no such person lived there.

Then, after walking around the school, they found themselves stopping outside of the director's office. The director was bewildered by their sudden entrance. Even though the place is an overwhelming blind spot, forgetting to knock was too unreasonable. As students— more so as part of the aristocracy—there is conduct to which they must adhere.

Cisty discerned that Arus ditched them. Such an action would be dangerous for any other student to perform, but wants to believe... there's more to the situation. The two left the office upon learning Arus's location. Their flustered steps as they left were charming to Cisty's eyes.

Alice voices a question she doesn't expect answered. "Are we actually here?"

Tesfia herself has no doubt to the answer. They heard it from the director herself after all, the top floor of the research building. It was as if she were saying the entire floor was customized for the sake of a single person.

Only one door is equipped with the latest security, but it doesn't give off a profound sense of oppression. Instead, its simplicity makes the two girls feel out of place. Before them is a normal door with a panel security system lock on the side. It functions by placing the palm against the panel and letting the device read the user's mana. It will not open unless the individual has been given proper clearance.

Tesfia presses the bell at the bottom of the panel to convey their arrival. The door slowly slides open and reveals that its simplicity is nothing more than a façade. It is as thick as the length of her palm.

The two hesitate as they peek inside and find never before seen equipment. Despite the place being newly made, an old musty scent wafts towards them. Piled on top of shelves to create many small mountains are an innumerable number of old books.

The overall color of the walls are white. They're have such a brilliant luster that they themselves appear to emit light. The room can easily accommodate 40 students from 4 classrooms. [4] It's much too big for a single person. Even with the various devices setup, about half the room is free.

Arus's click of his tongue strikes their eardrums. "Che, you're already here?"

Tesfia finds Arus deeper within the room behind a long desk and seated on a reclining chair comparable to the director's. The moment she sees him, the indignation she's feeling is pushed aside by a new frustration.

She can't help but adopt an overbearing attitude. After all, his true rank isn't something that can be discerned at a glance. Faculty members have even made direct appeals to the director about his insolence. [5] She says, "Why are you here?"

Arus says, "...Isn't this my laboratory? It's also my room."

Tesfia tilts her head. The room is spacious for research purposes, but the actual bedroom isn't very different from a dorm room. He also has a kitchen unrivalled in its setup, but it's a wasted treasure since he doesn't cook. She more or less understands that he emphasized that it's his lab first because his research takes priority over his daily life. As such, she isn't questioning his communal life when she says, "What are you... even though this is a dormitory?"

Alice says, "Tesfia, Aru..."

Arus interrupts Alice who's speaking up for him. He does so for the simple, childish, reason of making Tesfia understand the hierarchy that exists between them. He says, "Of course. Even this is rubbish once you consider everything I've accomplished."

"Ku..."

Tesfia's words are blocked with that remark. She has no idea to how far his achievements reach. Nothing she can imagine comes close.

Alice changes the topic to the main issue. Time is a pressing matter at the moment, and changing clothes will take up even more. While Arus might not have to worry about time due to being in his own room, she and Tesfia have

their reputations to consider. They want to avoid staying out too late. She says, "But Al, we thought we'd find you at the training ground."

Tesfia clenches her fist. The action isn't a threat, but it expresses her anger as she says, "That's right! I don't know how much time this will take, but I'll be the first to say this. We won't be staying here all night!"

An hour has passed since class ended. While the current season is one where sky is still sunny, Tesfia spoke in regards to her dorm's curfew.

Arus's gaze wanders around in search of something as he says, "Understood."

The hearts of the two girls beat with uncontrollable excitement as their training with the magician crowned as number 1 is about to begin. They tighten their grips over their AWR.

Arus holds a stick in his hand as he says, "Those are dangerous, put them away."

The two let out a stupid, ""Eh!!"" but the situation doesn't change.

Arus, once he has their attention, adds, "I'll only be teaching you mamono suppression techniques. Well, your rank might somewhat rise, but you'll be better off training yourselves for that." This is his final warning for them. They now have to choose whether they want to continue or not.

Tesfia is the first to express her disappointment with a glare, "Eh?" Her arbitrary behavior is then met with Arus striking her head with the stick. "Uuw~!!"

Arus says, "Are you an idiot? How do you think ranks are calculated in the first place?" That question was asked in class earlier.

Tesfia says, "I'm pretty sure it's the amount of mana coupled with the number of difficult incantations that can be cast, the suppression of mamono, and the completion rate of missions and requests!"

Her superior judgement gives an answer that barely covers the rudiments. *I* guess she more or less passes.

Alice supplements the answer with information that was learned in the day's class[7], "Doesn't it also depending on the subjugated mamon's ranking?"

Arus says, "Well, you're on the right track, but that isn't enough."

Question marks float over the two girls' heads as they recall everything that was covered in the lesson. Can't be helped.

Arus gives further supplementation to their information. "You're not wrong. So, what do you think is the most important aspect when it comes to raising your rank?"

He receives an immediate reply. Tesfia speaks with a tone that radiates self-confidence, "Naturally, it's the amount of mana possessed[9] coupled with your mastery over magic."

Alice's tone, however, is frail as she says, "I think it's through your mana and spells?" It is enough for Arus to read her inner thoughts, My reply isn't that different~

Arus sighs at their answers, just as he anticipated he would. They both failed to realize that he didn't want such simple answers. *Not even challenging them helps make any progress.*

All he did was confirm the limitations of the academy's so called honor students. *Tesfia is a disappointment to their hopes.* However, where Tesfia is simple minded, *Alice was able to read into the true nature of my question. She could judge that there was more to my words.*

Arus says, "No, the most important criteria for raising your rank is mamono subjugation."

Tesfia is shocked, "...!!"

Alice, however, isn't as surprised. She must have been expecting something like this.

He adds, "Subjugating a countless number of small fry might not amount to much, but eliminating a high ranking mamono will result in a major change."

Tesfia says, "Then, we won't be raising our ranks?"

"It's not that your ranks won't raise, but that you won't be able to match magicians who face mamono in actual combat."

Arus recalls what the director told him. The reason they're considered

excellent quadruple digits is because people have been placing their hopes on them due to nothing more than their mana quantity and being able to wield high grade magic. Arus doesn't have any expectations for the two, but the director does.

He continues, "As a result, these mamono subjugation techniques will raise your ranking in the future. I wouldn't mind if you stopped being dazzled by your present ranks either. Actually, I'd prefer it."

While Arus's provocative tone motivates Alice, it has the opposite on Tesfia by fanning her rebellious temperament. But whether it's one or two people, he doesn't care.[10]

He says, "It's not about being first class. Your rankings will go up without any problems."

Arus isn't concerned about Tesfia's worry about her ranking. Magicians facing actual battle in the military aren't all that mindful of it. Having a high rank does means more pay along with a guaranteed livelihood, but mostly, it's just a symbol of honor for magicians. Furthermore, the present situation is one where a high rank also comes with the responsibility of more dangerous missions. *That might be a blessing for humanity, but it's just rushing to one's own death.*

Arus preferred having a high rank until recently because that meant he received preferential treatment. Him taking missions prevented others from needlessly risking their lives.

Those, however, are his own values. Something he doesn't intend to push on the two girls before him. Telling them isn't his place either.

Alice nods to show her consent as he goes on to explain the training.

- [1] It actually says superior chicks, but that would lead to unnecessary confusion.
- [2] The katakana reads "sa ru ke ro i to". I don't know what the proper translation for that is.
 - [3] An act of god, inevitable.

- [4] 部屋の中はいつもの四十人が収容できる教室四つ分はある。
- [5] 威圧的な物言いなのも仕方ない。これをアルスの順位を知らないものが見たら不平を洩らすに決まっている。現に一部の教員から理事長に直訴があったほどだ。だからアルスの素性を知っている二人には不毛な説明になる。 The last sentence wasn't needed, so I left it out. I could be wrong though since the first two confused me quite a bit.

[7]アリスが補足を加えて授業で習った範囲はカバーできたと言える。

[9]魔力量

[10] 挑発的な物言いが逆にテスフィアの反骨精神を煽った風になっているが、アリスはやる気だし一人見るのも二人見るのも大した違いはない。

Chapter 2: The Superior Bad Students

Arus shifts Tesfia and Alices' attention to the rod in his hand by staring at it. For them, this is the first time they'll see his magic, however questionable the performance might be.

He covers the rod with mana in an instant. The action is as simple as breathing. Nostalgia hits him as he recalls repeating that action every morning for training.

Magnificent. Arus won't comment, but the flow of mana speaks for itself. Tesfia and Alice widen their eyes at the sight, but, *That's natural*.

Arus isn't familiar with the limit of Alice's magic, but the difference between her and Tesfia is revealed through the insuppressible disbelief on Tesfia's face. The few millimeters of mana flowing over the rod is akin to a clear stream. They both forget to blink as they draw closer to the rod.

Tesfia says, "What is this!?"

Alice says, "So beautiful!"

Arus says, "I probably don't need to tell you this, but you shouldn't get any closer. This is practically a formless sword."

Tesfia says, "Uuu....." as she and Alice pull back their faces.

I wonder if she felt a cold blade slide against her cheek.

Arus continues to release his mana. It wells out and spreads across his body. That mana will never reenter his body. Mana that leaves the body deteriorates. As a result, he needs to constantly pump out mana in order to maintain the cover. He says, "I will tell you now that this is training for beginners. Anyone unable to do this won't be able to defeat mamono. You could instead say that the person is courting death."

Gulps echo from Tesfia and Alices' throats.

Alice then notices there is only one stick. Yet, before she can open her mouth to comment, Arus says, "Well then, how about starting? —tsuto." He chops the

rod in half with his hand.

""——!!"" The two girls are lost to what just happened. While they know that people can train their bodies into having such abilities, they're also vaguely aware that that rod isn't an ordinary stick. Furthermore, there isn't a single crack on either half.

The action makes them wonder if what he did even classifies as magic. Mana is originally an energy source used to make magic possible. That magic for amputating and severing exists isn't strange. Arus's chop, however, manifested without him even chanting an aria. He reversed the need for wielding an AWR.

Arus could dispel their doubts in an instant, but whether they could understand him is a different matter. *It's also too troublesome*.

Alice says, "....Ah, this is another method of utilizing mana."

Tesfia refuses to accept the event that happened before her eyes. "Impossible, I didn't see any mana being used!"

Alice probably feels the same way. Her hair flutters as she nods to Tesfia's assertion.

Arus says, "If you could see through this technique, you'd be able to call yourselves Singles." Neither of the two are able to accurately grasp the meaning of his words. They tilt their heads as curiosity fills their eyes. Guess I need to explain how this works. With them this motivated, they're probably too anxious for anything else.

Arus then shrugs while saying, "Whatever." He rolls a memo-pad so it resembles the rod and gives a demonstration in slow motion. The ridge of his hand is eased down against the pad as though he were rebuking it.

Tesfia and Alice watch as close as they can without endangering themselves. Neither of them make a sound to keep from distracting Arus. The two green magicians see the mana ease its way across his hand up to the tip of his fingers just before he connects with the paper. The layer of mana is so thin, it wouldn't be noticeable unless stared at from point-blank.

Arus's knife hand splits the roll of paper without any resistance. Tesfia and Alice disregard their caution at the sight. Tesfia says, "It's true! Except..."

Alice says, "Yeah, how was it cut?"

The limits of their knowledge are what let them feel that way.

The act of bestowing mana to organic matter, or even increasing the body's strength, is by nature a pointless task due to their conflicting affinities. A layer of mana applied to a fist would immediately deteriorate with the residue scattering.

There is more to Arus's technique than just mana. That expertise utterly leaves common knowledge behind and is omitted from his explanation to keep from confusing the two.

Arus wants to hit the director. She recommended the two girls as superior magicians, but they're already stuck. *This is pointless*. He extends his hand in order to end the explanation the simplest way he can. He points at Tesfia and says, "You[1], lend me your AWR."

She holds her katana to her chest as she says, "I have a proper name."

That small, pointless, exchange makes Arus feel as though he's eating his own words. He says, "What is it?"

Tesfia draws her sword from its cloth sleeve while saying, "—!! This guy..."

Alice pacifies Tesfia with, "Fia, stop."

Arus makes a villainous expression as he says, "I see, it's Kasfia[2]. Thank you, Alice."

"That's wrooonng!"

At the serious impasse, Arus says, "Tesfia, if you're not going to lend it to me, then do you mind if I take a quick break to eat?"

Tesfia is at a loss to Arus's persistence— She's unable to keep pace. She's furious and won't forget her indignation any time soon, but the pause gives her a breath. Only Alice is able to accurately discern her feelings.

Arus releases his amazement as he unsheathes the sword and gives it his open praise[3]. "This really is a sharp sword. The magic inscription is precisely engraved too. If this katana is the AWR, you don't get to not choose it." As he expected, the inscription is one that grants an affinity to ice magic.

That's when he envelops Tesfia's katana with mana. The two girls are captivated by the sight with rapt expressions. With him holding a physical object, their reactions are dangerous.

Arus says, "Hey..."

Tesfia and Alice regain their senses. Tesfia says, "It'll obviously cut through paper like this, but how?"

They both realize the truth with an, "Ah—-!!"

Alice says, "That's right! Even though mana covers the blade, it accents the characteristic of the edge."

They return their gazes onto the sword, this time moving even closer. Tesfia says, "Like that!"

Arus's precise manipulation of mana lets him create a covering that is barely visable. He says, "Something like this isn't that big of a deal. Since the real thing is here, I only needed to nudge my mana into moving around the sword."

Neither Tesfia nor Alice are capable of preforming that feat. Arus speaking as though it's child's play has them once more recognize his prowess.

Arus says, "You might assume this was applied to my knife-hand earlier, but that wasn't a nudge of my mana. For that, I had to consciously manipulate my mana into the form of a magical sword."

Disbelief over comes Alice as she says, "Something like that..." The evidence before her eyes forces her to cut her words halfway.

Mana has a natural tendency to be absorbed by the body. While it can be molded, the time frame to do so is small. Neither Tesfia nor Alice are unable to not notice the occurrence of this natural contradiction. Despite that, Arus continues to do as he pleases. He makes that feat possible. They wonder if they'd be able to imitate him even after learning how.

Arus says, "Well, if you could do this, you'd enter double digits."

Tesfia and Alice accept his remark with displeasure. The joy they initially felt was premature. They realize that their abilities are lacking. Despite their reserves of mana, they'll need to put in an extraordinary amount of training to

reach that level. Furthermore, there is no guarantee they'll succeed after all that either.

Arus hands the two halves of the rod to Tesfia and Alice while saying, "Therefore." They scrutinize the rods and upon determining nothing is strange about them, grasp them with firm hands. Arus then adds, "I made it from the corpse of a mamono I once defeated..."

Two dry, clattering sounds ring out off the floor.

Arus says, "Hey! That's a valuable item. No other like it exists in the world."

Tesfia says, "No, well..." Being enthusiastic about using such an item to defeat mamono is difficult.

Arus says, "Relax, I've been training with that for years without any problems." Alice picks up the rod upon hearing his reassurance. Tesfia, however, picks it up by pinching it between her fingers. Arus understands that when it comes to teaching others, there won't be any progress unless he bullies them a bit. Therefore, he adds, "Not that I needed to."

He then says, "First off, try channeling your mana."

A high level of enthusiasm laces Alice's words as she says, "Got it!" She and Tesfia channel their mana, but then, bashuu. Their mana disperses.

The corners of Arus's mouth rise as he says, "Mamono have the natural ability of diffusing mana that comes into contact with them."

"Then, how are we supposed to channel our mana?"

A natural question. Arus wants to say, "Figure that out yourself," but such a reply would waste who knows who many days. Instead, he says, "Suppress the mana."

Tesfia and Alice are at a loss to Arus's words. Neither of them have ever consciously manipulated their mana before. Them not acting on his advice is proof that they don't know how. Arus says, "Aren't you often called excellent magicians?"

Tesfia says, "We never called ourselves that!"

How overly self-conscious. That sort of arrogance is just bait for mamono. It's like a curse that's been festering inside her for a long time. The thought makes Arus hold his head. People who don't give up trying to teach deserve to be called teachers. That moment leads to him somewhat softening his attitude towards his teachers.

Arus says, "Both of you, show some of your skin." His words are taken as sexual harassment for a moment, but he can only blame himself for the misunderstanding. With any area of skin serving his purpose, Alice bares her arm while Tesfia rolls up a sleeve.

He pinches them.

Tesfia says, "Itaa!!"

Alice says, "lie!!"

Tesfia says, "What are you doing?"

Their question is natural, but having them try it would be simpler than explaining.

Arus says, "Focus your mana towards your feet while I'm pinching your arms."
"""

Mana is generated within the body and cycles through it as necessary. When magicians use AWR, they unconsciously focus their mana into the hand holding the AWR.

Since it can be accomplished unconsciously, then it can also be willed. However, since magicians are accustomed to directing their mana unconsciously, an overwhelming amount of preference is given to that method.

Instinct deeply influences the flow of mana and let's magic materialize on reflex. That relationship between mana with the mind and body allows for unintended discharges and is also why magicians must always remain calm.

In short, the pain from Arus's pinch is the focal point for a proportional flow of mana. This allows Tesfia and Alice an opportunity to training the conscious manipulation of mana. The military would never let them get away with something as simple as a pinch. They'd have been given thick welts from a whip.

Regardless, if the pain is too low, then it won't serve as training. Therefore, some patience is needed to provide a constant pinch.

The faces of Tesfia and Alice turn red. But it shouldn't be so painful it stops them from thinking.

Tesfia isn't able to manipulate her mana, but should I keep saying that? Her mana is starting to split apart. Alice is Alice. Mana is somehow gathering at a terrifying rate where she's being pinched.

Tesfia says, "...What?"

Make up your minds already.

Arus says, "Are the two of you really four digits?"

"What do you mean?"

"I'm starting to question if you really are four digits if you can't even do something this simple."

Arus is a magician— a magician uneasy about humanity's future, he is not. Whatever happens to humanity is of no concern to him. If humanity were to go extinct, Arus is confident he'd be able to survive. However, researching would then become meaningless and his life would deteriorate into one of idleness. Simply stated, while humanity's fate is irrelevant, he doesn't want more than is necessary cut down.

Tesfia says, "No-not a problem. I'll master something like this in no time." Her awareness, despite her enthusiasm, is already fading.

Alice displays her burning fighting spirit with a vigorous nod, but does the opposite of what she's required.

Arus releases them while saying, "Great, I have work to do. The two of you should be fine on your own. Call me once you're finished."

Tesfia and Alice are baffled as they rub their erubescent arms. Their training is different from what they anticipated, but they won't reject it now that they understand its significance. Regardless, they interpret his words to mean they're bad students so he's abandoning them. ""………!!"" Anxiety wells up inside of them. They become doubtful they can accomplish their goal.

Tesfia calls out to Arus as he turns back for his desk. She says, "About this, isn't there a hint...?"

Arus stops walking and glances back to them over his shoulder. He barely opens his mouth and says, "Don't hold back." He then gestures that he's grabbing something with his fingers and twists.

The action is vague and can't really be called a hint. Regardless, Tesfia and Alice, more than protesting, stiffen their spines.

- [1] Arus says, "Omae." That is a very rude way of referring to someone in Japanese.
- [2] A pun with her name. The change means something close to worthless garbage, but not quite. Kinda like somewhat useful garbage.
- [3] The story never actually states that she handed him her sword. It's probably implied with Alice is the only one able to understand her feelings line, but again, nothing was directly stated.

Chapter 3: The Three Digits Upper Classman

Tesfia and Alice train late into the night. While the time is one where the sun just finished setting, it isn't quite yet time for dinner either. Furthermore, they only need to return to the girl's dormitory. That said, the prestigious Second Magic Academy has a befitting crime prevention system. The school grounds are reasonably safe.

While the power relation between men and women has evened thanks to the establishment of magic, the general public opinion still doesn't approve of letting a woman return home after dark. [1] As a result, Arus sees the two girls home.

Arus says, "Hey, pay attention to where you're going."

Tesfia and Alice walk while pinching each other. At times, they endanger themselves by closing their eyes.

"…."

Gon!! Tesfia crashes into a street light. A ring echoes into the evening as it shakes. She squats down and clutches her forehead while saying, "---!! Uugh~"

"Fia, are you alright!?"

Tesfia blames Arus with her glare, but he wisely avoids it by acting unperturbed.

She says, "Hold on."

"What?"

"Even if you say something to me, I'm not getting punished for this."

That would be a reasonable protest, if she were an ordinary civilian and not a magician.

A fed up expression covers Arus face. Despite his tone remaining calm, his gaze sharpens. "We-II, I doubt there'd be any need to punish you if your opponent had been a mamono. Concentrating so much on your mana that you

stop paying attention to your surroundings is pretty much putting the cart before the horse. It's nothing but a joke."

After that, the two girls... Tesfia in particular, continue back to their dormitory with the intention of continuing their training.

A building enters Arus's view. The doubt that laces his voice can't be help. Even if just once, he has only seen the men's dormitory. He says, "Here...?"

......Can the two even be compared? The security system is completely different. Denying entrance into the premise is an authentication gate cum reception area. Even if tall walls are used for locking up master criminals, they're more for protecting against invaders than inside threats.

The double doors slide open once Tesfia and Alice confirm their identities with their hands.

Alice expresses her gratitude with a politeness that leaves behind little awkwardness. "Al, thank you very much for today. We'll see you again tomorrow at school."

Tesfia, however, gives a crass wave of her hand. The strange nuance she adds to the end of her sentence by raising the pitch of her voice making Arus and Alice think she's asking a question. She says, "Well, thanks for your help today. We'll be in your care once more tomorrow, Al." The way she then turns her face is similar to someone trying to hide her embarrassment.[2]

Arus expresses his astonishment by shrugging his shoulders.

Tesfia turns to enter the dorm as she says, "Next time, we'll fini..." She's cut short as she bumps into a soft barrier. Her face is buried within a lavish pair of voluptuous breasts. While still buried, she mumbles out, "Habuu!!"

Alice's voice, upon seeing who Tesfia collided against, raises as she says, "Dormitory Leader!!" The meek tone she then adopts proves that the new comer is an upper classman[3]. "But I though... there was still time until curfew."

The dormitory leader's gentle expression is one free from anger. Her graceful features and waist long, flowing, black hair are accompanied by a warm smile. With the height difference between her and Arus almost nonexistent, she isn't

so much cute, but lovely. The mysterious air surrounding her serves as a lure for her beauty.

While Alice is also equipped with a mature charm, the upper classman known as "Dormitory Leader," is more bewitching than the Witch, Cisty. As a result, Arus finds her smile dreadful.

Her gentle expression is matched by her voice as she says, "Welcome back, Fia, Alice-san."

Tesfia finally separates from her and gives a flustered bow alongside Alice. Her expression is full of doubt. This is the first time since they've enrolled that the dormitory leader has paid them a visit.

Arus gives the upper classman a diligent bow to keep from her from prying about him.

She urges him to speak with a warm smile as she says, "Who is this gentleman?[4]"

Arus senses something suspicious, albeit different from what Tesfia and Alice feel, about this upper classman. As a result, he initiates proper decorum, even if superficial. He says, "First year student, Arus Reigin. They're late because I kept them too long."

".....!! No, no, that isn't a problem at all. The students here are just that enthusiastic about their studies. Besides, the curfew isn't really enforced."

She glances at Tesfia and Alice for a moment, but then looks back at Arus. She places a hand over her voluptuous chest and gives a slight bow as she says, "My name is Ferinella Socallent. I am a second year student."

Elegance traces her every gesture and reflects the quality of her upbringing. As her hair slips over her charming face, not a single flaw blemishes her form. While some might be fascinated by those action, Arus has his doubts. I've heard the family name, Socallent before.

Arus says, "You're a second year student?"

The dormitory leader is a heavy responsibility assigned to senior students. A member of the faculty could also fill in the position if needed.

Tesfia alleviates Arus of his doubt. She places a hand over her own chest as she says, "Feri-senpai is the sole second year student of this academy who ranks as a triple digits magician. My house hold has long been acquainted with her's."

What a presumptuous comparison. Aristocratic houses associating with one another should only be natural. While the concept of holding peerage isn't suitable for the era, nobility was able to survive thanks to the old families having deep military connections.

However, aristocrats aren't the only intolerable segment of society. High ranking magicians behave with the same dignity and pride while also lathering equal respect. This results from their court standings deriving from their ranks. The status of every house is representing through their corresponding military position.

Arus says, "Is that how is? I see."

Ferinella gives a forced nod. She then averts her eyes as she says, "At best, my rank is only 375, Arus-san....."

A triple digit magician attending an academy is ridiculous in of itself. As Arus mentioned to Tesfia and Alice earlier, rankings are greatly influenced by mamono subjugation. He then notices something strange about Ferinella's words. Her... "At best," remark was off. [5] I'm pretty sure I'm right, but if I'm wrong, I can brush it off with an apology. No need to think about this too deeply.

Arus says, "Is Vizaiste-kyo still well? I'm quite indebt to him since back then."

Ferinella smiles at Arus's words as she says, "Yes! Father has also been concerned about you."

Vizaista-kyo holds the position of general within the army. Before Arus increased his rank through major achievements for the country and was transfer to the Governor-General's direct command, he was one of the officers under his command. Officially speaking, seven countries protect humanity. In truth, mankind is protected by one country. The great power, Alpha is only one area. This is why the Governor-General and not the Marshal is the highest ranked commander. [6]

Tesfia and Alice are speechless at the exchange between the two. It only last for a moment as Tesfia soon recalls something and whispers it into Alice's ear.

A convinced expression crosses Alice's face as she says, "Dormitory Leader, you're familiar... with Al?"

Ferinella turns towards Arus after a moment in order to include him into her response. "You can say I know him, but this is the first time I've been privilege to have an audience with him. I learned about him through father's stories. With that said, Arus-san, are you teaching these two?"

Arus's tone is derived of respect for an upper classman as he says, "Yeah, the director pushed them onto me."

Ferinella doesn't mind his disrespect, but instead smiles as her expression relaxes. His lack as formality is interpreted as him being honest about his thoughts. She then cups a cheek and says, "That's such an envious story."

Are Tesfia and Alice worried about a thorn being included in her words?

Arus says, "Dormitory Leader, these two may be returning late from now on, but please overlook it."

Ferinella's forehead pulsates, *piku*. She smiles as she says, "Arus-san, please call me by Feri," but her tone isn't one that will allow him to refuse.

"O-Of course. In that case, you can refer to me as Al. They're already referring to me with it."

Ferinella smiles with delight upon hearing his reply. Only Arus notices, but Tesfia and Alices' eyes freeze upon seeing their upper classman's behavior. Ferinella says, "That makes me really happy, but I also have to keep my father's image in mind. I can't be so intimate with how I address someone, not to mention, this is also our first meeting. It's... truly... regretful, but would you mind if I called you Arus-san?"

"Tha-that's fine."

"Alice-san, you as well. Please call me Feri-san... or senpai. We've already passed the stage of you needing calling me Dormitory Leader."

Tesfia nods along with Alice for some reason despite having already called her

Feri-senpai. Maybe it's because even though Feri-san's looks happy, her smile isn't a smile?

Whether her difference in treatment between them and Arus is out of respect to his rank isn't clear.

Arus, having completed his task, judges he no longer needs to stay. He begins to step back as he says, "Well then, I'll be taking my leave."

Ferinella says, "Arus-san, these two are still girls, so please don't keep them too late in the future."

"I understand."

"Also... would you mind looking after me every once in a while?"

Arus along with Tesfia and Alice are unable to hide their astonishment at the request. He says, "I'm already watch over two people, a third every once in a while won't be any different."

An innocent smile befitting Ferinella's age lights her face as she says, "Great!"

"In all honesty, I'm not so conceited to assume I'd be able to do much for someone who's this close to double digits. Don't expect too much."

Ferinella's voice rings as she says, "I understand. I'll be taught without holding expectations."

Arus finally returns home. He couldn't help but have regret overcome him the entire trip. The mood was one where he was unable to decline her request. *And now I'm sacrificing even more of my precious time.*

-Dimond Storm-

The final lesson of the week comes after school the following day. As always, Arus hopes to spend the break in peace. *Despite my misgivings, this will be my third weekend*. Tesfia and Alice rarely approach him during the break.[7]

Although, getting the nickname Al seems to have worked out in my favor. Arus and Tesfia originally didn't get along, but now that they've seemingly opened up to one another, his classmates have stopped getting blindly angry at him.

.....Or that's how it should have been, but the boys have fallen captive to

those two. His male classmates have gone from glaring at him with eyes full scorn to ones full of envy.

And their appeal is only going to keep growing over these next few years. They might even end up disrupting the reserved forces. [8]

Arus had plans to immerse himself in his research after school. Hence, he narrows his eyes at Tesfia and Alice who stand before the door to his room and says, "...You should have said something yesterday if you had succeeded.[9]"

Tesfia says, "You can't do that. You can't cut our practice time."

Alice claps her hands together and says, "Al, please... even if it's only a little, I want to improve faster."

Their training can be completed independently, but it's inevitable that they'll want to ask questions. The answer is reduction, the reduction of his time.

Arus hesitates on rejecting Alice upon seeing her directly beg him for instruction. Furthermore— countless red spots cover their arms. I don't want to view it as a girl's arm... but still.

Despite the advent of magic technology, injuries can't be healed in an instant. At most, the natural healing abilities possessed by the person's cells can be raised. The situation changes if healing spells are overlapped, but few magicians can perform such spell craft. While the academy has an emergency healing magician on standby, there is no assistant healing magician.

Healing magic requires the healing magician to synchronize with the injured person's mana. Mana is by nature filled with the owner's personal information, so when two people are casting over a third, there will be three different wavelengths of mana present.[10] The proper method will prevent a rebound from occurring and allow for the cell itself to be influenced. Tesfia and Alices' wounds could be healed in a few minutes.

The technique required isn't on the level of just possessing skillful mana manipulation. Preforming cellular interaction could be likened to a master craftsman at work. The technique is different from what the two girls and Arus are practicing and also tremendously more demanding.

Therefore, we'll just have to wait for those red marks to heal on their own.

Arus speaks after that slight pause. "I understand, I'm somewhat at fault for the red marks over your arms after all."

The two nod as the door to his room slides open.

Alice says, "--!!"

Tesfia says, "What's this!" The room is nothing like it was yesterday: the mountain of documents collapsed and papers cover the floor. The long desk is buried in documents as well, there isn't even a space for drinks. "Why don't men ever care about this?"

Arus has no idea what she's trying to say.

While Tesfia and Alice continued training back in their dorm room, Arus immersed himself into his research. This is the result. The two girls exchange glances and roll up their sleeves.

Arus says, "I don't know what you're planning, but don't do anything unnecessary. Everything is efficiently sorted like this."

Tesfia says, "Arguing is pointless!!"

Alice's crisp movements and cleaning skills put profession house keepers to shame. Despite not understanding the documents she's handling, she's able to roughly keep them in order based on the locations she got them.

Tesfia... well, she's an aristocrat. She tidies the documents with enthusiasm, but her execution is lacking.

Tesfia says, "Alice, you can do anything.[11]"

"I didn't do that much!"

Arus, regardless of his thoughts, is shocked at how his room changed from a disaster to organized in only a few minutes. He speaks before Tesfia can voice her displeasure. "...He.....hey, both of you, cut it out."

Tesfia says, "I guess it can't be helped. We'll just have to see how it goes from here."

Arus smiles at the comment. Neither of them did this for a reward.

- [1] I could be reading this one backwards: 魔法の確立によって男女の力関係はないに等しいのだが、世間一般では暗くなってから女性だけを帰らせるというのはあまり関心しない風潮にある。
- [2] This one was tricky: 見ようによってはしっしと払っているようにも見えたが、顔を背けた姿は照れ隠しのようにも見える。
- [3] The kanji used both here and in the title isn't the one for senpai. It reads joukyusei. As a result, I used the translation it.
 - [4] It doesn't say gentleman, but the word she uses for "you" is polite."
 - [5] それに……たかだかという言い草にアルスはウンザリとした確信を持ち始めた。

予想は大方当たっているだろう。勘違いならば謝罪で済むのだから損得勘定する 必要さえない。

- [6](形式上は7カ国が人類の防衛に当たっているが表面上は全人類を守護する一国であるとされているため、表向きは大国アルファも一区域に過ぎない。そのため元帥ではなく総督が最高司令とされている)
- [7] それもテスフィアとアリスが休みの合間にアルスへと近寄って来ることに少なくない影響があってのことだ。
- [8] This one really left me stumped @_@: 成長期にある二人はこれから女性としての魅力が年々増すことだろう。一層の苛烈さを極める可能性は十分に秘めた予備軍だ。
 - [9]「……昨日出来たら来いといったはずだが」
- [10] この技術は施術者の魔力を負傷者の魔力に同調させる技術が必要になる。本来魔力には個人の情報が詰め込まれているため、三者三様なのだがそれに波長を合わせて送りこむことで反発に均衡が保たれる瞬間がある
 - [11]「アリスはなんでもできるな」

Chapter 4: The Limits of Talent

Arus watches and critiques Tesfia and Alice despite them only working on basic magic manipulation. Yet, even when they make mistakes, he can't call them immature magicians. Although the technique they're developing is essential for battling mamono, it takes long, unrelenting practice to develop. He predicts they'll need to continue as they are for at least a month before they can advance to the stick.

So then, how? I'd have to be delusional if I thought they got this far after yesterday because I flourished as a teacher. No, this is the result of their diligence. But to get to this point after one night... just what did they do?

Arus says, "Not there, gather your mana at your fingertips," as he pinches their arms and eases his mana inside them. A mana rebound follows, but Tesfia and Alice are provided with clear mana contrasts which allow them to better recognize the mana inside their bodies. Still, even though they're becoming aware of their mana, they can't yet direct the flow within their bodies.

It's only a matter of time now until they can use the stick to suppress their mana.

Unlike yesterday, mana is gathering in their fingertips bit by bit.

When two people work side by side, the subconscious has an easier time of influencing the outcome. Constant instruction is required to keep the mana training from stagnating. As such, Arus says, "Don't stop concentrating."

Tesfia says, "Hey, be quite!" She diverts her attention from her mana, allowing it to flow away from her fingertip and pool around where she's being pinched.

Arus sighs as he says, "There, see?"

Alice also loses concentration. She scratches the light sweat on her forehead as she says, "Ahh, it's no good..."

Neither of Tesfia nor Alice are actually exhausted. Their training barely

consumes any mana. Their frustration is starting to build up mental fatigue.

Arus says, "How about a short break?"

Both agree with limp nods.

While they rest, Arus settles himself behind his desk. Searching for data on his now clean and organized desk isn't as difficult as he first anticipated. He can switch between documents with little trouble.

Tesfia's eyes burn with curiosity as she looks at Arus. She says, "By the way, what are you researching, AI?"

Alice's eyes glitter with a similar interest as she says, "I'm curious about that too."

Arus says, "I'm assessing if transfer[1] magic can be used in combat."

The magic transfer Circle Port within the school is a byproduct of Arus's space manipulation magic. Strictly speaking, spatial manipulation magic does not exist. It is nothing more than a theoretical paper. That said, Arus has experimented on his own.

Much magic has been researched by Arus's own hand. He himself intends to elevate the standard of being a magicians as a whole so that new magic can arise. The ambitiousness of his goal is so grand that new applications are discovered for much of what currently exists as consequence.[2]

I should avoid revealing too much.

Alice clutches the school badge hanging from her chest as she says, "When you say transfer, you mean this?"

Arus is prompted to answer by Alice's vacant expression. "That's right. This will be the first time transfer magic will be utilized with the school badge." Currently, circle ports are established at regular intervals for the magicians watching over the national defense line in case of state emergencies.

While the application is the same, this is the first time such a general application is being attempted. Arus adds, "There is a defect. Its range is only 3km at best."

It has a lot of room for improvement, particularly in the action most

commonly referred to as "Jumping." Mana is duplicated and used as a reference in order to tether the coordinates of a transfer gate's destination. The nickname arises from the outcome occurring without regard to the concept of time.

The fundamental problem is that the duplicated mana signature will deteriorate. Containing formless mana in of itself within an unseal space is impossible. While mana deterioration doesn't occur when mana is converted to magic, it will slowly wither away over time once it alone is released outside of the body. Experiments show that this phenomena inhibits transferring to designated gates.

Room for improvement exists, but researchers have their hands tied by the premise that the mana's information body needs to be protected.

Arus continues to speak without anticipation for an answer. His researcher's spirit leads him to say more than he should. "Although this dilemma originally stemmed as an offshoot from research on applying this magic offensively, it has now become an important, fundamental, issue of magic.[3]"

Tesfia says, "Wouldn't directly using it in combat be the best method?"

Her suggestion is the problem with developing original magic. Whatever Arus creates must be usable by magicians as a whole. "Well, that's not wrong. However, even with that large constriction, it can still be used for killing mamono, inhibiting movement, supporting a comrade's assault, or even retreating[4]."

Tesfia tilts her head and groans "Mn~....."

Tesfia thought the idea held merit since Al himself was a magician who fought on the front line, but then recalls the director mentioning that he's an exception.

Using the number one magician as a reference for crafting new magic would be pointless since only one person would be able to use it. Arus himself views the idea as out of the question as it contradicts his goal of raising the standard of being a magician.

Alice raises her hand and says, "Could a wide reaching cover protecting

magicians be implemented?"

Arus will not flat out deny an opinion. Furthermore, Alice's proposal offers a conclusion. As a researcher, he himself considered the various possible applications of this magic. He says, "That's impossible; transfer magic isn't omnipotent. Depending on how it's used, it can assist magicians in defending against attacks. However, leaving everything entirely to a single spell is flawed."

Recognized magic has its name recorded within the magic encyclopedia. Of all the recorded spells, none of them are unspecialized. Specialized magic has much more preference over unspecialized magic. He adds, "Well, that's something you might learn better from a magician actually standing on the front line."

Arus afterwards arbitrarily continues lecturing Tesfia and Alice. Having never had the opportunity to share his thoughts with other people before, he continues well past the break's end with no thought to the flow of time. While curfew isn't broken, they complain a great deal about having their training interrupted.

The next day after school, he is unable to refuse their request for uninterrupted guidance with their training.

-Giga Blaster-

Tesfia and Alice are returning to their dorm.

Tesfia looks to her side with a smile on her face as she walks. Her tone isn't one regarding the inaccessible number one, but one used for those of the same age. "Either way, Al really surprised me there."

She speaks without consideration towards her words since Arus isn't with them. He separated from them with heavy footsteps after being called upon by the director over an academy broadcast.

Tesfia adds, "Wasn't he just like a child?"[5]

Alice says, "I need to say this, but that was appropriate action for his age."

"No, that was completely childlike. It was like he was showing off a new toy."

Alice cusps a hand over her mouth as she smiles and says, "In that case, it

must have been an amazing toy."

"Must have. Anyway, I understand his skill as a magician, but I wonder how good he is as a researcher?"

Alice is doubtless towards Al's ability. She says, "Don't you think he's soaring above everyone else?"

"I wonder if that's how it is. He might just be looking into a dead end."

"Yeah" I don't think it's anything like that..... Let me see the spell you mentioned earlier today once it's completed.[6]"

Tesfia rebukes her the same way an onee-san would. She says, "Oh, come on, Alice. Don't laugh at me and emphasize so much about tinkering with magic." [7]

Alice returns the favor by saying, "That's just like you, Tesfia! You're an aristocrat, yet every time you open your big mouth and say something funny, we're not allow to laugh?"[8]

Without anyone noticing, Arus's research arbitrarily became pointless. It's only saving point now is that it allows the two a mirthful walk. Later, when they actually understand a miniscule fraction of what Arus is researching... their expressions do a complete one-eighty.

-Wolf Claw-

Arus, having parted ways with Tesfia and Alice outside the research building, drags his feet towards to the Director's Office. He has a bad premonition about the invitation. No real, present, reason exists for the feeling. It's a reaction his body developed after speaking with the director and coming to know her behavior. The most Arus can do is trust those feelings, yet not do anything about them. [9]

Arus's laboratory within the research building is only a few minutes' walk away from the Director in the main building. Regardless, no one would blame him if he accidently wandered into the circle port.

Even though he knocks several times in order to maintain proper decorum, his expression is one of open aversion. A muffled voice grants him permission to enter the room. As he eases open the door, the Director says, "I haven't said

anything yet..." She understands his discontent in an instant.

Arus corrects his attitude with feigned ignorance and says, "I haven't heard anything yet."

She's the one on top here.

"Well, that's fine. You probably already know this, but there's a proficiency test coming up at the beginning of next month."

"I'm aware."

The test is included within the curriculum every year in order to update the admission rankings given to the students. This is needed because over 1,000 students are evaluated during the admission's test limited time frame. While the results aren't carelessly determined, they do lack in accuracy. For that reason, individual competency examinations are scheduled for soon as possible.

Arus has already guessed the Director's intentions. He says, "In other words, this is about the rankings?"

"That's right. In order to avoid causing a pointless uproar, I've decided to personally administer your exam."

Arus wants to declare that she's abusing her authority, but more than that, also wants to avoid a pointless uproar. That's probably the best solution. I was able to realize there's an examination period every year, but I haven't figured out how it's conducted.

He says, "Understood. Now, why did you call me?"

The director isn't surprised that Arus saw through her. Instead, she releases a sigh.

This must be the main issue.

She gestures to a stack of documents on top of her desk while saying, "This."

The documents had been placed in reverse, giving Arus a clear view of their contents. He asks for permission to continue with his eyes and is encouraged through a smile.

A sigh flows out of Arus upon reading through them. Written within the

materials are new teaching instructions proposed by the military. There is nothing he can do about what's written. The Second Magic Academy, according to national policy, must accept. "What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing in particular, just... what's your opinion?"

The Director isn't in a situation where she wants Arus's opinion, but one where she'd want everyone's opinion— especially Arus's.

Arus says, "Would asking something before that by all right?"

She gives a bewitching smile that makes Arus wonder if everything is progressing as she desired. She says, "Go ahead."

"Did this proposal result from my retiring?"

"Perhaps." She gives a vague reply, but doesn't consider that this issue resulted from Arus retiring the problem. The problem is the material's contents. Under the pretext of extracurricular lessons, students are to accumulate combat experience against mamono. She adds, "We can actually consider ourselves late in its implementation. The First, Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Academies have already begun introducing this into their curriculum. However..."

"All this will accomplish is increase the number of casualties."

The nuance in the Director's tone shows her frustration at the situation not being taken seriously. "I think so too."

The situation revolves around life. While graduates will enter military service where they'll sooner or later gain experience fighting mamono, students don't have the training for it. No, the issue here should be on whether enough consideration has been placed on the insurance measures failing. Even magicians who are still students will be able to suppress low ranked mamono.

Yet, as Arus once explained, in the slim chance that the students are over taken by fear, the moment their hearts give up, they won't be able to use magic. Whether a semi-permanent trauma develops will depend on the individual.

A safety net has been prepared for just that situation, but that person is the

first year director. During state emergencies, they are given control over higher grade students. In other words, while there is a difference in skill, they don't have much more experience than first years in subjugating mamono. Should a state emergency happen, such personnel becoming useless is easy to imagine.

Arus says, "Put short, this is from the top brass?"

"Seems like it. Only some great leader-san who's never fought a mamono would be able to come up with something like this."

Arus then changes to the main issue in order to deal with it faster. He says, "What do you want me to do?"

"I was mostly assigned defense missions. You're more familiar with mamono than I am."

Whether the Director truly is bothered by that is something Arus would like to question her on, but instead allows her to continue. She says, "So, Arus-kun, can't you do something about it?"

"Such as?"

"By exerting pressure on the higher ups or sweeping the mamono away on you own?"[10]

"Impossible."

Arus isn't received well enough among the higher ups to have any influence on them. While he was good at his duty, he was nothing more than a tool being pushed around. He might have been able to say something if this document was proposed by the Governor-General, but whether he can do that here and now is a different matter.

Towards the Director's other suggestion, he says, "Just how many students do you think you have? Covering all of them is impossible." He can only be in one place at a time.

The Director puffs her cheeks, creating an image inappropriate for her age. She says, "Then, do you have any ideas?"

How irresponsible. I probably won't be able to go home without saying anything either.

Arus shrugs his shoulders and scratches his head in annoyance. He says, "How much of this can you change?"

Even if she's the Director, she could end up calling upon misfortune by speaking out against a notice from the top. Even if her argument is justifiable, advocating a different opinion is taboo.[11] There for, if a good plan is presented, the Director has no choice but to force it through.

The Director speaks with an earnest expression. "Only so long as it doesn't alter the proposal's purpose." Whether she can or can't do it is irrelevant, she will absolutely see it through.

- [1] I may switch this term for "teleportation" in the future.
- [2] I could be wrong and this section could be specifically talking about space manipulation magic: アルスの研究はその手のものが多い。本人は魔法師全体の底上げを図って新たな魔法を生み出しているつもりだが、基本的に既存物から掛け離れた構想は同時に多くの利用形態が生まれるのだ。
- [3]「攻勢魔法への転用は元々考えてのことだったんだが、いざ魔法にするとなると何に重点を置くべきかが問題でな」
- [4] It translates to large division. I think it means, "large constriction." 「大きな分け方でも、魔物を倒す、行動を阻害する、味方の攻撃を支援する。それとも逃走に用いるとかだな」
 - [5] The context as to who is speaking here is confusing. I think it's Tesfia
- [6]「う~ん、そんなことはないと思うけど……今日言ってた魔法が完成したら見せてもらおうよ」
 - [7] そうね。あんなに力説しておいてチンケな魔法でも笑っちゃだめよアリス」
- [8] 「それはテスフィアでしょ。貴族なんだから可笑しくても大口を開けて笑っちゃだめよ!?」
- [9] たかだか予感がこれほどアルスの中で確信めいたものへと変わっていても不思議ではない。
- [10] I did not understand the second half >.> 上に働きかけるとか、単独でちょちょいっとさ

[11] This one is complicated... たとえ理事長であっても上からのお達しに口を挟めば不況を買いかねないし、それが正

Chapter 5: The Top Magician is Cut from a Different Cloth

Arus points at a map as he says, "This area here should do."

The Director is at a loss by his disinterested tone. "Eh?"

He slides his finger across the map as he adds, "This spot is a bit far, but it's best one since only the lowest ranked mamono infest it. B-rank mamono hardly ever appear. Granted, I'm not claiming this area is actually safe."

The director nods in understanding as she recalls some bitter memories. It would be different if only humans existed[1].

Unanticipated events beyond what was predicted are routine in the outside world. Claiming that strange developments always happen isn't an exaggeration. Contingencies for dealing with the worst case scenario are in constant demand.

The silver lining is that high ranking mamono can be detected dozens of kilometers away from the defensive line. However, the further away the mamono, the less likely the installed detection magic will detect it. The system isn't perfect, but it can promptly sense disaster grade mamono.

Arus says, "Since there's still a chance for a B rank mamono to slip past detection, supervision should be dispatched as planned. Also, it's needless to say this, but whoever you assign shouldn't just be a regular magician."

"This is going to be difficult."

Valuable magicians must remain on standby and be ready to mobilize at all times. That the military would lend one for a lesson is hard to imagine.

Arus says, "Well, I suppose there's no choice but to grant direct control to the highest ranked teachers within the Academy. You could also assign two or more teachers at a time or give them assistants. Is management of this operation being completely entrusted to the Academy?"

The Director gets a headache as she says, "Groups of 5 people + at least one

supervisor might work."

Arus says, "In that case, please do your best after this," and turns to leave. He is finished with giving advice.

The director is so taken aback, she releases a flustered, "Ehh!!"

Arus's nature isn't one where he'll cater to the Witch's expression. His annoyance surfaces as he says, "What now?"

She says, "I forgot to serve tea," while hurrying to rectify the mistake.

Arus hesitates on whether he should ignore her and return home. From his change of expression, it's due to a mental health check. [2]

Arus and the Director immerse themselves in exploring solutions until well into the night. She, at a point where she no longer being able to endure the situation, even comments about him lending a hand. A disdainful expression crosses her faces as she says, "The intention seems to be that if they overcome this trial, they'll mature into excellent magicians."

On the other hand, the situation also provides an opportunity for evaluating the aptitudes of Tesfia and Alice as magicians. Granted, the desire is for the mamono to be brought to their knees before reaching that point.

Thus the detailed discussion between a Singles magician and former Singles magician concludes.

Every night, after watching over the Tesfia and Alice on their training, Arus is called to the Director's office. He comes to even lack the strength needed to criticize how his valuable time is being is being wasted. He maintains his mental balance only by forcibly reminding himself that what he's doing benefits him.

Regardless, they have a limited number of days to solve their problem. Such is the reoccurring danger posed by those who never experienced the true horrors of actual combat. This new supervisor isn't the least bit reliable.

-Fist of the Beast King-

Up until the first day of the freshmen examination Arus has rarely been attending class. Missing the examination would lead to a re-evaluation and a lower score. Furthermore, if his grades drop too much, he might have to repeat

the year. Tesfia and Alice, fearing this outcome, stop by Arus's lab before classes begin in order to make sure he attends.

Arus complexion upon opening the door is horrible. The dark bags under his eyes instantly draws their attention. They can tell at a glance that he hasn't slept in days.

Tesfia says, "You said you were going to rest, but you didn't sleep at all."

Arus says, "It's my time. You have no business in telling me how to use it."

"Al, did you forget? Today's the examination!"

With an absentminded expression, he begins thinking back on something he wasn't supposed to forget. Then, after some time, says, "Oh yeah."

Tesfia glances at the clock displayed on the digital screen inside Arus's residency. She then spin him around and gives his back a strong push while saying, "Hurry and wash your face!"

For the first time, Arus, Tesfia, and Alice come to school together. Arus covers his mouth in order to smother a large yawn, "Haa~"

The Academy designated bag he should be carrying isn't with him. Bringing it is pointless since he doesn't even take his textbooks to class.

Tesfia side glances at Arus while saying, "Alice, were you able to prepare[3] for the exam?"

"More or less, but I'd like to go over it once more."

As the two glance at the textbooks they carry, Arus speaks a doubt that makes their efforts meaningless. He says, "This is a practical exam. Isn't it too late to do that now?"

Alice stops walking and her mouth opens without closing it as she says, "Ehh!!"

Tesfia strikes with a roundhouse kick towards Arus while saying, "If you know that, then say it sooner!" He's still half asleep, but easily catches the attack with one hand.

While the skirts of the Academy's uniform can't be considered short, Tesfia kicked high enough for it to slide up her leg. A contrast forms between the transparency of her thin, silk, slip and white thighs as they come into view.

Tesfia stiffens, but Arus doesn't express any interest in her secret garden. Regardless, a blush forms on her face in an instant.

"#%&\$@&#!!" Her mana coils around her fist as she lashes out to punch Arus. While her power doesn't double, the unconscious movement of mana is an indication of her true feelings.

Arus pushes the leg he's holding aside. The overall poor management of the situation truly makes it all look like a magical illusion. [4]

Tesfia glares at Arus with, damp, upturned eyes as she clutches the hem of her skirt. She says, "Did you see it?"

"Saw it!" [5] In truth, Arus didn't see it. At this angle, the kick wasn't high enough for anything to be seen. However, if he voiced those thoughts, Tesfia would lash out with magic.

Harmony? That was Arus's expectation when he first enrolled. It's late.

Classes are canceled due to the examinations. Those are all that will occur today. The morning's main menu consists of having students emit mana by wielding all the spells they have learned[6].

Multiple faculty members supervise the training ground, making detailed recordings of the data. Furthermore, magical investigations aren't possible within the training ground. By keeping the examination vague, cheating is prevented.

With each class entering the training ground one at a time, the morning can't help but be crushed. Arus enters after changing into his training clothes and waits for his name to be called. Tesfia and Alice are also waiting. *Tesfia doesn't look like she can sit still during times like these*.

Arus distracts himself by observing the manipulation of mana in the air. The tension he feels is a bit different from the others. If I recall, these two girls are aristocrats. In short, they need a rank that doesn't shame their households. Even if their IDs show that they're four digits, they're nervous the faculty members

will say something like, "Since the ranks determine during the admission exam are inaccurate..."

He can't imagine that their ranks will change by a great amount. Regardless, he can only keep his mouth closed. Even if he tries to reassure them, he doubts they'd be able to hear him.

Alice pours mana into her lent AWR for a maintenance check. That action is a prevalent one within the training ground.

Arus, from upon entering the training ground, is the first to have his name called. Neither Tesfia nor Alice wish him luck. They understand doing so is pointless. Instead, they focus their attention on their AWR. They too are called soon afterwards.

Arus drags his feet to the ninth zone. The entire way there, he wishes he could be immobilized. He is the only examinee not carrying an AWR even though they are being lent for the occasion. The stares he receives while walking have taken a strange flip from when the year first started. As expected, the hostility is gone, but their as presumptuous as always.

Today's stares mostly hold curiosity towards his missing book. *I forgot to bring it.*

He enters a suspicious, black covered, section of the training ground and, as was arranged, meets the Director. She says, "Ara, you didn't bring an AWR?"

Arus never cared about his rank and refuses to start now. He says, "I need one?"

She adjusts the machine with a few quick movements and crosses her arms in order to tell him off, "Naturally."

"I'll be fine without an AWR."

The Director says, "I see, then let's start..." and points at a nearby box. It is the right size for a person to enter. The military uses that piece of equipment to measure the amount of mana individuals possess. "Stand there."

Once Arus is inside and the magic detecting iron plates surround him from all sides except the front [7], she adds, "Release your mana."

The mana he lets out is detected by the iron plates and is measured. Just a trace amount is enough.

The Director says, "OK, got it." She then sets her attention onto the terminal's screen. The projected percentage leads to her saying, "--!! Ehh!"

What a familiar reaction. It's enough to give me an idea of the number. Doing it over would be a pain though.

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Arus says, "It isn't broken."

"But..."
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Anyone other than the Director would have probably kept insisting for a redo.

[8]

Arus says, "Shall we move onto the next test?"

"Ye-yeah..."

What a weak response.

Arus brags about himself in order to help the Director cope with his score. "I was always on the front lines."

In line with his claim, he never faced a difficult battle despite being there. The innate mana he was born with is just that much. *That's probably one of the reasons the military took custody of me.*

The Director says, "Th-that's right. Um, next is..."

I guess she's still shocked.

She adds, "I want you to demonstrate all the magic you've learned, except..."

Arus equips various devices onto his limbs. "This is how the military carries it examinations."

The Director tilts her head as she's filled with curiosity. "How come?"

"The gauge sometimes flies off due to the output of the magic wielded."

"N"... Wait, that's bad."

Arus points at the expensive machinery in order to emphasis the point as he says, "The meter breaks."

The Director's eyes shine with an uncontainable curiosity. She's more interested in that event than damaging the equipment.

Arus is fed up with the Director who also happens to be a magician. He says, "I can't imagine there are hundreds of spares lying around, so let's settle for just this one."

She says, "Yeah," and then steps away from the screen where the data will be sent. She adds, "If you're going to use attack magic, please aim for that spot there."

A hollow, cone shaped, piece of machinery rest before Arus. It's something he's quite familiar with. The objective is to launch magic down the cone. A material with high magic affinity will then absorb the spell. Should the absorbing power be exceeded, the excess magic escapes towards the blocked off end of the cone where it can continue to slowly be absorbed.

A horror story unfolds as Arus reacquaints himself with the device.

-Fist of Faith-

Alice's name is called while Arus is undergoing his examination.

Tesfia says, "Go for it, Alice," and resumes focusing on her preparations as she waits for her turn.

Alice says, "Same to you, Tesfia," as she proceeds for the second examination zone. She then stops as a low rumbling shakes the training ground. A thought leads her to tilt her head. At first, it's a suspicion, but she soon accepts it with confidence as the trembling strengthens.

Earthquakes are familiar occurrences to humanity. Large shifts began occurring within the Earth's crust at the same time the mamono appeared. As such, no student would be caught unaware of how to respond to one. Therefore, Alice's conviction towards the tremor's identity solidified while she was following the evacuation procedure.

An explosion echoes throughout the training ground and stirs up a commotion. "Eh—!!" Everyone stops evacuating to stare at the ninth examination zone. Black smoke leaks out from within and whirls around.

Faculty members gather from the other examination zones. Before they can do anything, a person steps out from within the ninth examination zone. Mana coils around Director Cisty as she says, "What happened wasn't that big of a deal. Please resume the examinations as normal."

Many question why the Director is acting as an examiner, but their voices fade as she lifts a finger. She then chants something and lightly circles her finger around. The black smoke drifting around above the Director gets sucked into a vortex.

No one is able to turn their eyes away from the Director. With everyone nailed in place, her desire of continuing the examination doesn't happen. It remains so until she gathers up and expels all of the black smoke.

Alice returns to Tesfia's side while everyone is still glued in place out of admiration[9].

Tesfia says, "What the heck just happened?"

Alice's thoughts jumble her voice. "That, well over there..." She then rushes into the ninth examination zone where she says, "Al, are you alright!?"

Arus stands overlooking the broken and dispersed pieces of equipment with regret. He says, "Alice...?" He picks up some of the pieces while continuing, "I messed up.[10]"

Tesfia says, "What did you do?"

"You both seriously came here? How much further are you going to keep pushing these violations?" The Director reenters with a twitching cheek. Having reached the pinnacle of magic, not a single spot of soot stains her. Tesfia and Alice go wide eyed and step aside to let her through. "This is the middle of an examination."

Once the Director confirms that Tesfia and Alice have left, she says, "At any rate, that spell just now... it made me think of spatial manipulation magic."

Arus just stares at the Director.

As to be expected from a former Singles magician. Despite being the Director, she observes the tacit understanding between magicians of not delving into the

workings of original magic.

Arus reflexively responds to the question that strikes at his spell's core of as thanks. He says, "You are correct."

"Then, even though it was heated, I wonder if it's actually melting."

The explosion wasn't caused by magic, it was caused by the equipment due to an increase of energy.

Arus lets her infer his answer by casting his eyes downward. This method of communicating is more convenient for him.

Even though spatial manipulation magic was used, that isn't information that has the permission to be recognized, not even by the Director. To begin with, magic that directly interferes with a space does not exist. Spatial manipulation magic is an umbrella term that was established as a reference for various systems of magic.

That space can be interfered with is a phenomenon that has been proven. Arus just did so again by creating a mess of melted and displaced machinery. That he interfered with space is a fortunate turn of events since the phenomena of melting is the essence of that spell.[11]

Revealing this much is probably fine.

Only the governor-general with whom Arus has close connections, Belick Sarebian, knows more. Overwhelming power is often feared. Likewise, many would want to utilize it. However—

"You being able to wield that sort of strength makes me curious to the type of nature you'll have it develop."[12] The Director casually ponders a thought while resting a finger against her chin.

Melting is a difficult type of magic that falls under the system of fire magic. It being classified as fire magic should be a straight forward deduction, yet the former Singles magician thinks otherwise.

Magic is classified by several natures. Individuals have ranging compatibilities with those natures; Tesfia is compatible with ice magic while Alice is compatible

with light magic. Magicians aren't unable to wield magic outside their compatibilities, but the strength of their spells will be greatly affected. That said, any system of magic can be wielded at a high level.

Arus's compatible nature is nothing. Saying he isn't compatible with any system of magic would be more accurate, but the current phrasing is more fitting. Right now, he can even be said to have thrust the compatible nature of his magic into being disposed towards spatial manipulation magic.

That's also something that can't be recognized.

Arus says, "Director!"

"Mnn—.....!!" His eyes and tone remain unchanged, but the mana he wears around himself doesn't. His entire ambiance is different. "...Right."

Arus resumes his examination with that shift. "So, what about the examination?"

"This outcome didn't result from an error. Since your spell is something that is impossible to measure, it will be interpreted as having the highest score possible."

"I see."

"With this, the morning section of your exam is finished, but is there something you'd like to ask?"

"Not in particular."

The Director regains control of the examination. The earlier outburst appears to have never happened. She says, "Thank you for your hard work."

Once Director Cisty sees Arus out of the examination room, she releases her regret, "Haa~....." She acknowledges her careless blunder and mocks herself for it.

- [1] 現場の人間だっただけあるということだろう。
- [2]それでも明らかに表情を変えたのは精神衛生上の措置だ。
- [3] The litteral translation is "make countermeasures for the exam".

[4] I'm not certain, but I think the action's p.o.v. switches to Arus here:

掴んでいた足を押して躱す。当然すぐに手を離した。

下手をすれば本当に魔法が飛んできそうな勢いだ。

- [5] I'm not sure if this actually a confirmation, or asking for a clarification: 見るか!
 - [6] The literal translation is, "All the magic that has been acquired."

実際見てはいないし、傍から見ても見えるほどの高さではないのだから過剰過ぎやしないかと思ったが、それを口に出せば魔法が飛んでくることは予想するまでもない。

- [7]中に入ると、正面以外を感知に適した鉄板が覆っている。
- [8] 理事長でなければ、この程度では済まなかっただろう。
- [9] 我に返ったアリスが何があったのかテスフィアに問うまで一同は憧れの魔法師に 釘付けとなっていた。
 - [10] Could also be interpreted as, "I was wasteful."
- [11] 融解という現象が魔法の本質であり、空間に干渉したのは福次的なものとして。
 - [12] 「となるとあれだけの威力があるのだから、あなたの性質は何になるのかしら」

Chapter 6: Ambushed Partner Candidate

Arus is greeted with the strange gazes of his classmates upon stepping out of the problematic examination hall. He avoids them by leaning back against wall near Tesfia and crossing his arms. She herself is squatted down with her katana leaning against the wall.

A sense of emptiness passes through him at no one being on his right.[1] Alice has already gone to her examination hall, but Tesfia hasn't been called yet.

Tesfia says, "What was that?"

"Equipment malfunction."

Suspicion fills Tesfia's face at the blatant lie. The equipment did explode, but that was because of Arus's magic. With skeptical eyes, she looks up at him and with a sharp tone, says, "Liar."

Arus's eyes flash with annoyance as he gives a sound rebuttal. "Are you going to pry?" Magicians must maintain a minimal level of etiquette towards each other.

Tesfia, picking up on the context, snaps her head back to looking frontward. ".....Fump!" She then mumbles to herself, "I'll probably get a chance to see it once we're in actual combat."

"…"

Then, as her name is called, she adds with a flat voice, "I'll catch up soon."

Arus doesn't catch her expression, but feels resolution in her tone.

She gives her body a light stretch, holds her katana firm at her side, and walks to her examination zone with a steady gait.

Alice comes out in Tesfia's place, but asks the same thing as her. Yet, since the conversation Arus has with her flows differently than the one he had with Tesfia, he finds himself going mad trying to keep information from slipping off his tongue.

-Electric Shock-

The morning examinations finish around lunch time. As a result, lunch is a bit late. For something to be labeled late, it means time was not spent as planned. This isn't my fault.[2]

Each student has a lunch upon returning to their classroom. Some got theirs by heading towards the school cafeteria while others bought light meals from a stand. Arus sits down at his desk the same way as everyone else. Only one detail differs; his hands are empty.

"I forgot." The reason is the same for carelessly not sleeping the night before. He isn't in the habit of preparing one for himself.

Arus lets his body drop against his desk. He might be tired, but this is much more troublesome. Both of those places are bound to be crowded by this point in time. Either way, it's too late now.[3]

The sound of bags rubbing against each other interrupt his sleep. "Can you open this?"

Arus, telling himself that lifting his head *is too much work*, peaks his eyes open. A new bag that appears to have just been bought rests before him.

Alice's voice carries over from the other side. She sounds like a mermaid playing a *koto*[4]. Her voice lulls him deeper into sleep as she says, "You don't look like you've brought anything?"

From her tone, the question isn't one that can be ignored either. It was asked purely out of good intentions. Arus lifts his head and sees that chairs have been setup at his sides. Desks are also being arranged next to him.

Tesfia says, "Here, this one[5]."

Arus would have immediately expressed his gratitude if Alice where the one who handed the bag to him, but with Tesfia, he feels a need to confirm first. "For me?"

"It's no big deal. I bought it from a stand."

Arus can't help but doubt something is wrong. As such, he restrains himself. ".....Sorry."

"It's seriously not that big of a deal."

Isn't that just lip service?[6]

The situation creates a spicy topic for an enjoyable lunch... or it should have [7].

"Then, just don't eat."

The bag is plundered away before Arus's eyes. He can't even think of a single way to get it back. "——Ah!" Using flattery or revealing juicy gossip are skills beyond his capabilities. The issue isn't that he gets tongue tied, but that his sensibilities are estranged from those of his generation.

Arus regains the lunch after muffling out a sincere apology. In his hand is a sandwich. Even though it comes from a stand, it's from the stand of a prestigious school for aristocrats. The sandwich is made from the finest of ingredients. Tesfia and Alice also eat something similar. He says, "A simulation fight is next."

The hands of Tesfia and Alice stop midway to their mouths. "".....!!""

Tesfia says, "Where did you learn that information? Who's the source?"

While telling Tesfia and Alice what he knows about the test isn't cheating per say, he can't tell them he heard it from the Director. Smoke would certainly billow if he did. Still, what he says isn't so exaggerated as to be called a lie. Freshmen must have never undergone a proper rank measurement.

For him, it's something he has experienced many times in the military. Once the purpose of an examination is known, the way it's conducted shouldn't have much variation. Therefore, he says, "It's nothing more than a method for accurately measuring a magician's rank. In this case, the procedure is partnering against someone of a higher rank."

Since no one ranks higher than Arus who stands as number 1, he usually isn't measured through a simulation battle. In truth, the magicians deployed for combat don't care that much about being measured. Accurate measurements of their ranks are pointless since their standings are in a constant flux. While getting measured once a year is mandatory, very few take the exam seriously.

Arus's face then twitches as he realizes that what's he's about to say imitates the Director's method of speaking[8]. "Considering the number of people, you'll

probably be partnered with senior students."

Tesfia and Alice, consider their abilities, and anticipate that they might be partnered up against third year seniors or even teachers.

Tesfia says, "No way..."

Alice says, "Can I even win?"

Arus says, "You won't know if you can win without trying first. Also, your rank won't drop from losing. Your objective isn't victory, it's accurately having your ranks measured." While the morning practical allows for the racking up of points, the afternoon simulation match injects a downward adjustment of those points.

Once the ranks of Tesfia and Alice are taken into consideration, that a certain other rank within the academy will be uncovered is hard to imagine.

Since the examinee's opponent is a grade higher, they open the match with an aggressive offense. There are even manuals for this too. First the examinee will be on the defense. Then, after a while, they'll be able to turn things around and show off their true merit and combat ability. A lower ranked opponent would never be able to let an examinee fight to the fullest.

Tesfia raises her fighting spirit. "I'll fight with the mindset that anyone can win!"

Arus, having just been in a dispute with her, keeps his mouth shut tight. [9]

Once lunch ends, everyone in the class heads back to the training grounds. The second examination will take longer than the first. The other classes are also clustered within the training grounds. Just like during the morning examination, magic is being used to isolate ten zones. The sounds of combat can be heard from all over.

The various students of the other classes gather around Tesfia and Alice. Arus, meanwhile, is in the corner leaning back against the wall. "As you'd expect from the popular."

Someone speaks to Tesfia and Alice. "Fia, Alice, did you hear?"

The two tilt their heads as Tesfia says, "What?"

"It seems like you'll be facing Beis-senpai in fourth examination hall."

The third year student, Delca Beis, is a celebrity known by everyone within the school. That person is a four digit magician with the rank of 1000. Even in the military, officials have already decided which unit that person will be deploying with to the outside world.

Even as underclassmen, their aristocratic upbringing of sticking their noses into other people's business as a show of good will doesn't change[10].

Tesfia isn't bothered. "I see."

Alice exaggerates her true feelings. "That's not good."

Neither of them feel much surprise over their opponent's name. After all, both are acquainted with the three digits magician, Ferinella and are receiving lessons from the singles magician, Arus.

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"...Aren't those two acting a bit weird?"
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"Somewhat."

"Yeah....."

This is Tesfia and Alice showing their respect. They might still be far away from reaching that level, but it right now isn't something they have time to worry about.

Kusuri says, "Didn't Fia have a habit of asking about the rankings within the school?"[11]

Tesfia shakes her hands before herself as she says, "Che, don't bother me with something like that."

Alice adds to the topic. "I'm positive Fia used to do something like that."

Tesfia is being teased, but she doesn't notice. Their words instead stir a memory and evoke a smile. She is no longer as concerned with those rankings. Only two people know the reason for that change.

For a moment, her gaze falls upon a black haired youth. A knowing smile plays at the edge of her lips and amazement laces her tone. "Well, look at that."

Alice smiles as she says, "You're right."

From the way his head hangs downward atop of his neck, he appears to have fallen asleep. Even his light breathing seems audible to them despite the distance.

Someone says, "What is it? Tell us."

"No way."

A relaxed mood sets in as the conversation continues. Once the turn to the training ground switches to Arus's class, Tesfia and Alice break away from the students of the other classes while waving their hands.

Arus is once more the first to have his name called out. Alice gently wakes him from his nap and helps him dispel his drowsiness.

Tesfia watches Arus's back as he walks away and says, "Just who could his opponent even be?"

Alice says, "Maybe the Director?"

"No way~"

A strong premonition passes through the two of them, but they can only respond with bitter smiles. Regardless, the word, "match," stirs a memory that wells up an unbearable sense of curiosity. Them wanting to watch the top magician battle is only natural since Tesfia herself wasn't able to display her abilities against him.

As a result, they try to sneak towards his examination area with the intention of slipping inside, but end up getting scolded by the teacher directing everyone.

Spying is an action that needs to be avoided. Anyone attempting it during the examination will inevitably be suspected of cheating. While Tesfia and Alice didn't cross that line, a shadow of disillusionment still passes over their faces. Getting caught was regrettable.

Arus steps into the examination hall and finds the Director waiting as expected. However, unlike in the morning, a girl a bit more petite than Tesfia has joined her.

She has silver hair. From the way it reflects the light, one is given the illusion that silver thread grows down from her head. Its shape as it reaches her chin is

enchanting. [12] Underneath her bangs glitter clear, sky blue, eyes that hint at of being azure.

Also, while she is dressed in a training uniform, it isn't the one designated by the academy. She wears the familiar garments Arus used while in the military. However, what stands out more than that is her expression. It is neither happy nor sad. What he senses is a limited more abstract sentiment. She's just like a doll. Anyone who sees those graceful features would agree.

Arus speaks first. He looks at the silver haired girl and says, "She's the one who's been monitoring me." The identity of the gaze he felt during his first simulation match is finally before him.

The silver haired girl's shoulders tremble at Arus's comment.

The Director scratches her cheek. An awkward smile cross her face as she says, "So you noticed after all."

"Is this place a deposit for the military's troops?"

The silver haired girl steps forward and kneels. She keeps her head down and speaks with an indifferent tone. "It's a pleasure to meet you for the first time, Arus-sama. I, more than being tasked by the governor-general to monitor you, was dispatched to be your partner. I am called Loki Rechbehell. My rank is 1034..... my detection rank is 58."

Detection is a peculiar magic meant for uncovering mamono. Magicians specializing in that field of magic have the ability to investigate the core, or in other words, the life force, of mamono. Yet, since it is a rare ability, those magicians will, at most, only be partnered with double digit magicians.

Arus, however, has no need for such a magician due to the peculiar nature of his mana. "I don't need you."

She continues to keep her head down. Her beautiful high voice rolls out like a soothing instrument. "I expected as much."

The Director continues in her place. "Loki lacks experience as a partner. I'd like for you to teach her as well."

Arus does not want to take on any more burdens that will waste his time. As

such, he confronts the one responsible for wasting his time. "I believe the implication of her monitoring me is stronger. As I said, I don't need her. Besides, I thought you were more than capable of monitoring me on your own?"

The Director's eyes spin. Monitoring him is not one of her original duties. "I'm busy..."

"In that case, I'll directly negotiate with the governor-general for the withdrawal. Magicians able to use detection are too precious to be allowed to idle around."

The silver haired girl's shoulders tremble again upon hearing she isn't needed.

Eventually, a stock phrase is uttered. "Loki is an excellent magician..."

Arus doesn't even bother arguing against it. "How many more are you planning to impose on me?"

"Now, now, there's no need to make a hasty conclusion. You still need to face this girl in a simulation battle... remember?"

The purpose of the examination has developed into something considerably overbearing that moves beyond what's considered normal class work.

Regardless, Arus hesitates on opposing the Director. Even if he does have a match against Loki, it won't affect his opinion over her capabilities. As such, he says, "Understood."

The main reason Arus accepts is because he feels a sense of familiarity with the girl called Loki. It mostly stems from her wearing a military uniform despite being at an age where calling her a girl is more appropriate.

A peculiar type of tension fills Loki's face as she lifts her head. There is a glimpse that she has the determination to stake her life on this match. "Thank you very much."

The simulation battle begins at once. The Director stands between the Arus and Loki as they make their final preparations. *Loki in particular needs to steel her heart.*

Loki, just like Arus, doesn't hold anything in her hands. *He must be thinking that she's looking down on him.*

Concealing weapons in matches against humans can provide an advantage. In other words, Loki has experience facing humans. What need is there for having something like that as part of the military's training menu?

Just before the match begins, Loki gathers mana into her arm.

It is nothing more than a skill belonging to a magician approaching three digits, but from Arus's perspective, her technique is quite sloppy. Even when compared to Tesfia and Alice, it's far from being a threat to him.

Loki says, "Arus-sama, will you allow me to stay as your partner if I land a strike on you?"

Arus's interest is peeped by the suggested condition. From Loki's expression, she doesn't want him to pull any punches. She wants a fair match despite knowing he's number 1. As a result, Arus raises a finger and signals for her to attack in order to let her know he isn't brushing her request off as a joke. He says, "That's if you can."

Loki gives a deep bow with her head. Her vast combat experience glints through her petite frame.

Arus eventually feels the familiar electric like tension of battle and lets out a nonchalant grin. Once his expression returns to being serious, Loki readies herself for battle.

The Director sees that both sides are prepared and gives the signal to start.

- [1] Literally, it translates as: Not having anything in his right hand feels lonely. Considering the context, I'm assuming that that is what he actually means.
 - [2] 遅めというのは単に時間が予定通りに行かなかったことを意味し、決してアルスのせいではない。
 - [3]しかし、俯いて間もなくすると。
 - [4] A 13 stringed instrument
 - [5] Those short ones are always so tricky: 「はいこれ」
 - [6] もちろんリップサービス? だ。

- [7] 楽しい昼食を演出するための話題提供、スパイスみたいなもの……だったはずが。
- [8] アルスはどうなるのかと言うと、理事長の口ぶりからやらないわけにはいかないのだろうなと顔を引き攣らせた。
- [9]気合いだけは籠っているが、テスフィアと一戦交えているアルスはただただ口を噤(つぐ)んだ
 - [10] 貴族の中でも鼻に付かず、面倒見の良い性格から下級生の注目の的だ。
- [11] This is who I think is speaking according to the context. Yes, this is the first time she's been mentioned. If you have a better translation for her name, it's クスリ
- [12] 照明を反射した銀糸のような髪は前下がりに顎のラインより下、綺麗な前下りなフォルム。